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I S A B E L,
T H E Y O U N G W I F E
AND
T H E O L D L O V E.

BY
JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,
AUTHOR OF "CREWE RISE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO
HENRY THOMPSON, ESQ. M.B., F.R.C.S.

MY DEAR THOMPSON,

THOUGH I am aware that the Profession in which you are so actively engaged leaves you little time for the perusal of what is commonly called "Light Literature," I cannot deny myself the pleasure of dedicating this Novel to you, in the trust that you will regard my doing so as an honest, though faint, expression of my affectionate admiration for your high attainments and generous nature, and of

my gratitude to you for very many acts of
friendship, which, I am delighted to think,
can never be repaid by

Your very sincere Friend,

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON.

ISABEL.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN POTTER OF KILVERTON.

CAPTAIN POTTER was not what is usually understood by a great man, and yet he was not without heroic elements. He was not great in stature, for five feet six inches exceeded his extreme height; neither was he great in mind, for his intellect bordered on the minute. His fortunes also were not great, for at no time of life was his income much more than a thousand pounds per annum. But he possessed the rare

and enviable power of making his smaller companions have faith in the strength of his littleness, and his more influential neighbours respect his inferiority.

He was believed in for twelve miles round Kilverton, as a complete British officer, who had done the nation important service, and had been mentioned in Wellington's despatches, though the truth was, he had never been in any action with an enemy, and the only occasion of his name appearing in the great commander's reports, is where it is stated, "a hundred mules under the convoy of Lieutenant Potter of the Sixth, have arrived; they will be of service, for I am sadly in want of beasts of any kind, for carriage." When the battle of Waterloo brought peace to Europe, Lieutenant Potter found himself a captain, but compelled to quit the service, of which he was an ornament, on the modest half of a very stingy full-pay. Returning to the neighbourhood which saw his birth, he looked about with a view to fixing himself in

life, and eventually, after patient endurance and perseverance, succeeded to his satisfaction. He was not one of those men who, with one stride, step to a respectable position on fortune's ladder, but achieved by a series of little deeds that which very lucky mortals do with one stroke ; he might be said to have had a tiny Jacob's ladder of his own, running up by the side of fortune's ascent, and to have indefatigably spent his existence, hopping up the grades thereof, like an ambitious little cock-sparrow as he was, or, to indulge yet further in metaphor, he might be said to have never had a sack of apples given him at once, but was quite content to fill his bushel with windfalls.

He began life without a penny beyond his commission and outfit. How he got *them*, whether he picked them up in his youth, as he went on picking up other things afterwards, whether his father bought them, whether he had a father to buy them, no one (that is, no one, after he became prosperous,) knew. Cer-

tainly, in a little village forty miles away from Kilverton, there lived a poor wheelwright who was prone to talk at the public-house to the effect that his half-brother, Squire Potter, or Captain Potter, might as well be humble, for if he was rich, his birth wasn't over-honest. But this was probably the scandal of a low fellow; and if true, what of it? the abuse of the obscure is as ineffectual for good or for evil to gentlemen of Captain Potter's position, as the prayers of the impenitent, or sarcasm in journals that no one ever reads.

At about forty years of age, our captain, who had settled himself in a cottage at Witherstone, the market town two miles distant from Kilverton, married the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, with a portion of three thousand pounds.

After giving her husband a child, named Isabel, this lady died, and was interred in the churchyard of Witherstone, where her tomb may be seen. This event did not pass off

without gossip ; the more so, because Mr. Garbidge, the Witherstone solicitor, whom Captain Potter never consulted on business matters, *happened to know* that the late Mrs. Potter's fortune was not settled on Isabel, but was the unfettered property of her father.

"Trust that man," said the legal functionary with bitterness, "for keeping what's his own, and getting what isn't."

For six years or more Captain Potter continued to inhabit his cottage, occupying himself with the instruction of his little girl, and cultivating friendly relations of a sedate character with the families of his own rank near him. He was very polite to two maiden ladies at Woolverton, and was not less attentive to his old friend, Mrs. Chickerley, of Woodstraw Island. He collected rents for these ladies, sold their orchard produce for them, brought them the newest-invented eggs for their hens to sit on, executed commissions for them, and presided over their establishments ; blowing up

their men-servants, and keeping their butchers and bakers in order.

Miss Mira Felstead of Woolverton died—“without making a will,” cried Mr. Garbidge, the very instant he heard of the event. But there was a will, though not of Witherstone manufacture, and Captain Potter was put down for a legacy of one thousand pounds. Mr. Garbidge said parliament ought to take the matter in hand, and prevent such things. A few months,—and the other Miss Felstead died. She also left a will, and in it bequeathed another one thousand pounds to her dear friend, Captain Potter. Mr. Garbidge heard, and—held his tongue. It never rains but it pours; Mrs. Chickerley of Woodstraw Island went after the Misses Felstead, leaving her much-valued friend, Captain Potter, five thousand pounds and the furniture of her house.

“It was beyond trifling, something must be done,” said Mr. Garbidge; so he forthwith went into his green-house, and cut off bunches of the

finest of his Muscatel grapes, and sent them with a polite message of congratulations to the fortunate man.

Habit, philosophers tell us, is one of the most important laws of our nature ; and society now contracted a habit of devising property to the captain. People conceived the notion that it was meet and right to do as the Misses Felstead and Mrs. Chickerley had done, and that no decent female character ought to quit the district for another world, without making a trifling bequest to Captain Potter. Now he came in for a tea-pot, now for a chest of drawers, now for a ten-pound note.

Captain Potter was made a magistrate for the county. How he got into the commission no one could tell ; the magnates of the land were well enough pleased to see him there ; but the Reverend Stephenson Fulcher, an opulent, and thick-headed rector, who was furious at not having obtained the same honour, growled out that it was a "job," and that there was such a

thing as a qualification requisite. When the rector was informed that Captain Potter had the requisite property, and was already a Justice of the Peace, and sworn to behave as such, the good man shook his head, and sneering vindictively, said, he recollected the time when beggars were not so rich.

A county magistrate and the father of little Isabel, not more than eight years old, Captain Potter made a second alliance, taking as the companion of his fortunes the child of a deceased farmer. The lady was well educated for her rank of life, plain, though not painfully so, verging on forty years of age, of a delicate aspect and weak constitution, and with a fortune of twelve thousand pounds.

Thus had Captain Potter gradually increased in substance. For years he had quietly maintained his position at Witherstone, and at length moss had settled on and covered him. He now gave up his humble residence in the little town, and moved to a house in the parish of Kilver-

ton. It was an erection of white brick, standing away from the high road, surrounded by a few very graceful trees, and with a small but elegant garden encircling it. There were forty acres of land attached to the dwelling, and for the purpose of farming these in the most improved style, the Captain put himself into heavy laced boots and mud-coloured trowsers.

When the next Christmas came, the readers of the county pocket-book were supplied, together with an abundance of charades, enigmas, rebuses, and whatever else such things are called, with engravings of half-a-dozen county-houses, amongst which was "Kilverton. The Residence of Godfrey Potter, Esquire, late a Captain of the Sixth Foot." Clearly the quality of England had received a new member.

But Captain Potter by no means presumed to put himself on a footing with the county aristocracy. He was assiduous in attendance at magistrates' meetings, and very energetic as a dispenser of justice, but he always paid homage

to the chairman, and never differed in opinion with any one. Colonel Torringer, of the High House, Banbridge, soon began to call him "my dear Potter;" and when Sir Ellerton Knyvett, who thought it right, for county purposes, to be polite to the fellow, asked him to dinner, Captain Potter won the baronet's heart by saying, "No, no, Sir Ellerton, I am not going, at my time of life, to ride across the country to dine with great men whom I am not in a position to visit as an equal. So I decline your invitation; but some morning, when business takes me your way, I will call in at your lunch." Lady Ellerton Knyvett, on hearing this, said it was refreshing to find there were some people still left in the world who knew that modesty was not subservience.

Captain Potter, on removing to Kilverton, became respected far and near, and very popular in Witherstone. The inhabitants of that small city soon began to find many virtues in their old friend, which they had not seen before; his martial

bearing, his stern sense of duty, his disinterested patriotism, were now perceived and appreciated. There was no mean worship of success in the good people, though it was the success that enabled them to worship. When they eulogised their Captain, they really believed him to be all they said ; and not having longer memories than their neighbours, of the great world, they were not perplexed with questioning how it came they had not found out their hero's worth before. The Captain on his part fully gave in to the new state of things. When he took his diurnal progress through the little doll's-house streets of Witherstone, to the news room, it was a study to see him walk by the gazing windows with the air of the intrepid British officer, grasping the handle of his spudded stick firmly, as if it were a sword, and with his slight features firmly set. " It's all quiet here," his bearing seemed to say ; " but just follow me round the corner, and there you will behold a scene of carnage over which British valour shall ride triumphant."

One morning, rather more than ten years after the Captain had established himself at Kilverton, and about six times ten years from his advent into the world, he descended to his breakfast parlour, where his family were assembled at the morning meal. The day before had been spent by the Captain on the outside of the mail coach, which had deposited him late at night in the High Street of Witherstone, after having conveyed him from London, which centre of intelligence it was his custom to visit once a year for a fortnight. The journey had fatigued the Captain, and had caused him to indulge in an extra half-hour's sleep ; so when he entered the parlour, the family prayers had been read by Mrs. Potter, and the servants, looking very much ashamed of their devotions, had retired.

“ My children, God bless you !” he said, as he opened the door, and passed round to the fire-place.

This benediction was delivered to a party of five, consisting of Isabel, a beautiful girl, just

entering on her twentieth year, and the four children of Mrs. Potter regnant. Of this second family, the three eldest were boys, varying between the ages of ten and six, and the youngest was a cherry-cheeked little girl, called Agnes.

The children looked very pleased at the sight of their parent, but they none of them quitted their places at the breakfast-table.

The Captain put his back to the fire, brushed up with his hands some hair that was rather grey over a head that was rather bald at the summit, and pulled up his shirt-collars.

"Well, my dear," he at length said, turning to Mrs. Potter, who retained her seat near the coffee-pot, "what report have you to make?"

The eldest boy's eyes turned anxiously to his mother, and he breathed quickly till she said in a solemn, but not ungentle voice, "Very good, thank you, Godfrey. They have all been good children"—(and after a pause)—"*very* good children."

"I am very glad to hear it," said the Cap-

tain, eyeing his offspring as if they were a file of soldiers: "it gives me the greatest satisfaction to hear so good a character of you. Tommy, have you given the servants any trouble during my absence?"

Tommy, the eldest boy, turned red.

"He has been very good, Godfrey," said his mamma, coming to his relief.

"I'm glad to hear it." And then he added quickly, "And how has Isabel behaved?"

"Always well. She is always a good girl." But the answer was made in a voice which said plainly, "You see, Godfrey, how just I am to your child."

"Very satisfactory," responded the father.

"Isabel, my love, come and kiss me."

A flush of pleasure crossed her face as she rose to obey; and when she threw her arms lightly across her father's shoulders, and put her pink lips to his, the long lashes of her brown eyes glistened with tears.

"We have missed you very much, papa," she

said, with warmth. "I have taken my walks every day, because you told me, but I wanted you to make me enjoy them. Do you think you'll be able to take me out to-day?"

"I am afraid not to-day, my dear," he replied, still keeping his erect attitude. "I think I have a little commission for you to execute for me."

"Oh, thank you," said Isabel, gratefully.

She was fully convinced that her papa was the kindest and best, as well as the bravest man that ever lived. When the Witherstone people made court to her by praising him, she used to say, "Ah, but you can't know him till you see him at home."

Isabel was not taller for a woman than her father was for a man, but her slender and well-proportioned figure gave her the effect of height; and in her form, as well as in her face, there was an unusual combination of delicacy and strength. Her features were slight, and her oval face was favoured with a complexion of as

transparent a pink as English girl was ever endowed with, and that is saying no little. But the charm of her beauty was in her eyes, which had a complex expression of timidity and mirth.

"Well," said the father, playing with a ringlet of her hair, which was drawn off her forehead, "I have not forgotten you in my absence, for I have brought you home a present."

"What is it?—I am very much obliged."

"I'll tell you by-and-bye. Now go to your seat again."

Isabel retired with an expression of ineffable happiness in her face.

"Tommy," resumed the Captain, in his word-of-command voice, "come and kiss me."

Tommy obeyed, and went back to his seat.

"Teddy, come and kiss your father."

Duty done.

"Frank, come, it's your turn—quick—sharp's the word."

Little Frank went through the ceremony, and then Captain Potter said to his youngest child

with the same starch gentleness he had manifested to his other daughter. "Now, little Aggy, come and give papa a kiss."

Little Agnes approached him gladly, but the papa did not bend down.

"Now you must kiss me—as I tell you," said he, looking at her with an expression meant to be intensely comic.

"You are such a great, tall man," cried Agnes.

Every one burst out laughing, and Isabel exclaimed, "How droll you are, papa."

Mrs. Potter put a chair near Agnes, who, taking the hint, clambered up it, and gave the salute amidst more laughter.

"Now, children, no more noise," said the word-of-command voice. "Silence! silence! Begin breakfast."

Isabel, as a maiden of dignified years, partook of bread and butter her father cut for her, and an egg he especially recommended, she having nothing in common with the children. Isabel,

moreover, had the privilege of conversing with her papa and mamma, whereas the children did not speak unless they were spoken to. These, and sundry other marks of dignity, had been conferred, together with a gold watch, on Isabel, two years before the time now treated of, after her confirmation.

“Have you anything to tell about London?” asked Isabel.

“Not much, my love. The show in Covent Garden Market I do not think up to the mark, considering the season we have had, and how advanced we are in May. The potatoes, of course, were fine, the green peas too were not bad, but the asparagus was wretched—and there was scarcely a basket of early strawberries worth looking at.”

It appeared that the Captain had been to Covent Garden Market every morning, and to the House of Commons every night when there was any business going on. Isabel asked him if he went up the Monument, or into the Thames

Tunnel ;—but it appeared he had not honoured either of those places with a visit.

“ Did you see your nephew, Hugh Falcon ?” Mrs. Potter asked mechanically and also awkwardly—very much as if she had been told to put the question.

A little fresh colour came into Isabel’s cheek, and she raised her eyes with interest. The Captain’s countenance also became of a brighter hue, and the most irritable of the hairs in his head made demonstrations of readiness to change into the service of a porcupine.

“ Worse—and worse, ma’am,” said the Captain bitterly, and with that ferocity of commiseration with which we speak of the misdeeds and misfortunes of friends with whom we have quarrelled. “ Worse — and worse, ma’am. That young man has lived sinfully, and he will die wretchedly. I don’t wish to judge harshly—but he will either commit suicide or die in an hospital.”

“ I was afraid it was so,” sighed Mrs. Potter.

A cloud of trouble was on Isabel's face. "Is he indeed so bad, papa? Is his state so very abject?"

"Abject!" cried the Captain, scornfully. "Ask him.—He would laugh in your face. Oh no!—now he is in the full career of profligacy he is triumphant. Care can never reach him; want, hunger, starvation, a watery grave can never reach him! Just let us wait a few years, and then when his health has failed him, and his dissolute course has come to an end, let us hear what tune he will sing. Oh, now he is magnificent enough! Wanted me to dine with him at his club! He could give me first-rate Burgundy!—And, as if this were not enough, offered to lend me his horse to ride on in the park!"

"Then he is not in immediate suffering. I am glad of that," said Isabel.

"So am I, my dear," responded her father in a softened tone, watching her narrowly. "I was only fearing for him."

"He was always very kind to me.—And he is very good-natured."

"Yes, my child, but good-nature cannot be pleaded as an excuse for grave faults."

"Of course not—of course not, papa," Isabel replied, apologetically and sadly.

"And good-nature is often a fault itself. Bless me, I remember in the Peninsula," cried the Captain, with the word-of-command voice rising again, "the Duke of Wellington sent a man to the right-about for being good-natured. A man of my company was out on an excursion with some comrades, when they saw a goose waddling about near a cottage. It struck the fellows they should like to have a stew for their supper, so they said to my good-natured friend, 'Shoot him, Bill;' and the man, although he knew there had been an express order issued the day before, prohibiting pillage, was so good-natured, that, just to oblige his companions, he fired at the goose—and shot it!—Well, what do you think the Duke did to this good-natured man?"

Every one was silent.

"Flogged him, you perhaps ask, Tommy?"

But Tommy didn't ask the question, but only blushed somewhat—for flogging was a delicate subject with Tommy, and a topic of conversation he disapproved of.

"No!—*the Duke had him shot!*"

"How cruel! how hard!" cried Isabel.

"It's a hard world we live in, my dear," returned the father jauntily, quite put in good humour by his ferocious anecdote.

"But I trust that Hugh Falcon won't shoot a duck," said Mrs. Potter, piteously. The good lady was not remarkable for seeing the point of a conversation.

"He has done bad enough already," answered the Captain, bringing down his hand emphatically on the table with a bang. "He has written plays—and he has written novels. Every possible chance has been given that young man, and every chance he has flung away. He was put into the navy, and the career of Collingwood or

Nelson was before him,—but no, he must quit a profession that offered no scope to his talents ! He was then sent to Oxford,—he might have become a bishop, or at least a college tutor ; but no, ma'am, he could not submit to discipline—he was rusticated, and left the place in disgrace and debt ! Then he went to the bar ;—he is a barrister. What does he do ? Does he plod on in the steps of Lord Eldon ? Nothing of the sort ;—he writes plays and novels !”

“ But though novels are not very clever things, and clever men ought not to spend their time in writing them,” put in Isabel extenuatingly,—“ still, they are not all wicked.—Now, Pickwick——”

“ Well,” said her father, taking her up sharply, “ what is that about ?”

Isabel was taken aback, but managed to say, “ About London and the people, and some pretty country places, too.”

“ What would you say of London, forming your opinions from Pickwick ?”

"Well! it must be a very funny place," Isabel answered with a smile of humour and doubt, enough to make any man fall in love with her.

"There," cried her father, triumphantly, "just think of this! This is what *Pickwick* teaches! This is the best instruction that can be extracted from the best novel I know of—a harmless book, comparatively, or I should not have allowed you to read it! London a funny place! it is just the one thing it is not! Large, populous, wealthy, magnificent, well-lighted, ill-drained, rapidly-extending — but funny! Bless my soul, you might as well call me funny! My dear, I think you are talking rather too much. Go on with your breakfast."

The breakfast concluded without more conversation, and after the children had said their graces, each in turn, the Captain giving the word of command, the boys wheeled off to the schoolroom, to undergo instructions by a meagre

tutor who visited Kilverton every day, and had his residence at Witherstone.

“Did you say, papa, you had a commission for me to execute?” Isabel asked.

“Yes, my love; I wish you to take a packet I brought from London, and a note, to Copley Rectory.”

Isabel’s face lighted with satisfaction. “Oh, that will be delightful.”

The Captain apparently was gratified with his daughter’s pleasure. “Then you like going to Copley,” he inquired.

“Of course I do. Mr. Dillingborough is so very kind to me. I do not deserve it. But he is so very, very good.”

“He is very good,” said the Captain, gravely and slowly.

“How shall I dress?”

The Captain arranged everything in his house.

“In your best walking-dress, with your new mantle.”

It did not take Isabel many seconds to don her costume, and present herself for her father's approval before she started.

"You look very sweetly, my dear," said the Captain, smiling proudly and affectionately. "But I think—yes—I should like that best. Just make one alteration. Change your collar and neckerchief, and wear the lace collar and silk scarf I gave you before I went to London.

Isabel thought her father rather more fastidious than usual, and then without words speedily did as she was bid.

"That will do," he said, when she again presented herself. "Here are the packet and note for Mr. Dillingborough ; and here is the present I have brought you from town. It is a botanical work on the grasses of Australia, with beautiful illustrations."

Isabel's eyes were again bright with emotion. "Dear papa, you are very kind to me. I try to repay you with my love, but that is not enough."

He kissed her very gently—quite naturally—without any of his starched magnificence, and assured her she had always been a joy to him, and that her happiness was ever a subject of his thoughts.

“But trip away, my child,” said he, leading her to the front door, and letting her out into the garden. “It is a lovely morning—the sun is warm, and the birds are singing.”

CHAPTER II.

THE RECTOR OF COPLEY CUM WITHERSTONE.

THERE was one person for whom the élite of Witherstone and its vicinity had a greater respect than even that in which they held the gallant lord of Kilverton. And this person was the Honourable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, the Rector of Copley cum Witherstone.

Whatever may be the faults of the established church of England, Ireland, and Wales, it unquestionably has a few good things ; and of them the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough managed to obtain more than one. The annual value of the

living of Copley was above one thousand three hundred pounds, and that of Witherstone above seven hundred pounds. Besides having the spiritual guidance and tithes of these two parishes, the rector had a canonry in a cathedral in the west of England, which yielded him one thousand two hundred pounds per annum; and he also absorbed from the ecclesiastical endowments of the kingdom between two and three thousand a-year as rector of one of the largest and wealthiest parishes in London.

The clergyman owed his good fortune in part to his powerful connections, and in part to talents which he possessed in common with most of the members of his gifted family. At college he obtained a reputation for scholarship, and immediately after taking orders, he edited two plays of Aristophanes. The reviews, penned by base-born scribblers, treated the editor's notes with contempt; but the Lord Chancellor entertained different views, and rewarded the young man by making him a London rector with up-

wards of two thousand a year, which was not at all too much, considering what a great deal more Aristophanes, in all probability, got for writing the plays. Then came the livings of Copley and Witherstone, the presentation to which his noble father bought for him with the political influence of a borough, the seven voters in which, tenants of his lordship, sent two members to parliament. This little negociation was effected full thirty years before the time at which the history proper of these pages commences, and long before the Reform Bill had stabbed at the very heart of our institutions, and cut away a large portion of every Englishman's unquestionable right to do what he likes with his own. As the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough could not now be said to stand in need of a greater income, an inimical prelate, who wished to try him with the temptations of wealth, made him a canon of Brandon.

When the Anti-Pluralist movement began, the Honourable and Reverend Harrie Dilling-

borough was one of those who were most ferociously attacked. For a long while he took no notice of his traducers, and allowed himself to be depicted as a wolf and a devourer, without making a reply. Perhaps the church afforded his wounded sensibility ample consolation. On one occasion however, he responded to the "Mutual Illuminator," and most victoriously too, as he thought. The "Mutual Illuminator," after accusing him of over-representing his income to one set of government commissioners, when it was his interest to do so, and understating it to another set of commissioners, when it was his interest to appear as a poor and oppressed priest, went on to enumerate, separately and collectively, the worth of his various preferments, and to enlarge on the duties which they each entailed on any conscientious clergyman.

Was such a state of things to be permitted to exist, which allowed Witherstone, a town with three thousand two hundred and twenty-five

inhabitants—three thousand two hundred and twenty-five souls—to be without a resident rector? While Mr. Dillingborough was enjoying himself in the elegant retirement of Copley, or residing in the monastic seclusion of Brandon, or partaking in the festivities of fashionable life in the metropolis, what was the condition of Witherstone? And then the “*Illuminator*” went on to make out the condition of Witherstone to be very dark indeed, which, on the honour of an historian, it was not. A week elapsed; and then Mr. Dillingborough sent for publication, to that well-known journal, “*The Orthodox Conservator*,” what he was pleased to head, in emphatic characters, “*The Candid Statement of the Honourable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough;*” in which it was shown, *firstly*, that the livings of Copley and Witherstone always had from time immemorial been held together, and therefore ought for ever to be united; *secondly*, that the income derived from Witherstone was barely seven hundred and ten

pounds, instead of seven hundred and eighty pounds, as stated in the "Mutual Illuminator;" *thirdly*, that the population of Witherstone was three thousand and fifty souls, and not three thousand two hundred and twenty-five; and *fourthly*, that the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's total revenue from ecclesiastical sources was under five thousand five hundred pounds per annum, instead of being five thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds.

The writer went on to remark, in the mildest of courteous terms, that it was to be lamented that so good a cause as that of social progress (by which term he understood an earnest, and, to some extent, a successful endeavour to remove evil things and *to correct evil persons*) should be endangered by individuals attacking sacred institutions, and making statements at variance with fact.

The "Mutual Illuminator" rejoined in a flip-pant, not to say ribald, manner, making great fun of the dogma "what always has been, always

ought to be;" and asking what difference it made whether Witherstone contained one hundred and seventy-five souls more or less than they stated?

The Rector closed the contest with another communication to the "Orthodox Conservator;" briefly remarking, that, in his eyes, as a priest of the Establishment, one soul was of vital importance, much more so were one hundred and seventy-five souls. He concluded, with trusting that the public would see that a clamour had been raised by a designing and anonymous writer about an abuse that did not exist; and in a postscript he added a quotation from the works of a distinguished moral philosopher, who is read with much attention at our universities, maintaining the fitness and propriety of pluralism. The friends of "The Orthodox Conservator" were triumphant, and asserted that the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough had effectually repelled the slanderous attacks.

Witherstone, however, was a good, honest, little town, not overgiven to speculation and

dissent, and it believed in its rector. It delighted in having so magnificent a parson, that he only visited them for two months a-year, and then resided in an elegant mansion in the adjoining parish, to which he did not deign to invite any of his humble neighbours, not even his own curates ; it felt pride in the bright liveries resplendent with silver lace, and the town-built carriage and spanking bays that dashed through the market-place, bearing to or from Copley rectory, a noble lord who had been passing a few days with the rector, or the rector's son, Captain Dillingborough, R.N., who would shortly save England's honour untarnished, and be made a peer, and be put on the top of a column. The exciseman of the district, an infidel rascal, who had no faith in the government he served, certainly sneered at the equipage, and asked if St. Peter had a drag of that sort ; but his views were held to be detestable. The Witherstone public would not have been so tolerant and complacent, had their pastor been

less than the great man he was ; for just the other side of the county, where an ordained Croesus, in the shape of an opulent tradesman's son, attempted to play Captain Grand over his parishioners and the neighbourhood, the entire district revolted, the minor gentry cutting him, and the populace deriding him.

The Radical journal of the county pointed to the contrast, and taunted the Witherstone people for not rebelling in like manner. Were they bound by such a servile admiration of " the sounding nicknames of the vainly great," that they could submit to that from a lord's son, which they would not bear at the hands of a plebeian?—It was not dignified of Witherstone, but still not so base as the Liberal organ tried to prove it to be ; for the Witherstonians, in their romantic visions of this planet, had a belief that England was the noblest country in it—that her nobles were of the best and most comely of her inhabitants—that England's great metropolis, with its vastness of wealth and power, and refinement, was the

wonder of the entire globe—that England's queen reigned therein, surrounded in her court by the high-born, the brilliant, the wise, and the beautiful. To the Witherstone mind the pictures of the court pageants, the royal processions to Westminster, and the reviews in Hyde Park, in the sheets of the Illustrated London News, were matters of grave history and dazzling fact. And of all this earthly glory, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was to Witherstone the representative, for the district round about contained none so great as he, the land being portioned out for the most part into small estates, the property of yeomen, and the few large estates that there were, being in the hands of trustees for charitable uses. Loyalty and poetry threw a halo around the rector.

The morning was bright and balmy, if ever May morning was, when Isabel tripped down the Kilverton avenue, proceeded, with the blood playing music in her cheeks, down Kilverton Hill, under the shadow of the high firs that

grew on either side, and on reaching Priest's Paddock turned over a stile to go by the meadows to Copley Rectory. Before starting forward again, after having crossed the stile, she paused for a minute to look behind her at Witherstone, which lay in the distance, resting on the sides of two modest hills, dimly picturesque in the gleaming mist which was bearing the scent of flowers and Maythorn up to the sun, a grateful incense to that which gave them life. The spire of the church shone like a line of varnished silver ; a freshness was in the breeze, a frosty crispness dallied with the warmth of the day ; and Isabel was very happy. The momentary depression she had experienced on hearing of the evil courses of her cousin Hugh, had given way to the genial influences of the morning, and she caught herself singing the burden of a little song she had been teaching Agnes.

“ Is Mr. Dillingborough at home ? and can he see me ? ” she asked modestly, of an astounding

footman in a pantry jacket, who opened the door of the Rectory, in answer to her summons.

Mr. Dillingborough was at home, and would doubtless see Miss Potter. Would she walk into the drawing-room? Isabel complied, and having entered the apartment, was soon engaged in admiring all the beautiful things it contained; the rare pictures, the wonderful Chinese toys, the gorgeously-illustrated books. She was disturbed in a few minutes by the opening of the door, and the entry of a tall, handsome man, considerably over sixty years of age, in clerical costume, grey-headed, and of a venerable aspect. One of the chief constituents of the old man's good looks was a healthy brightness of complexion.

Isabel advanced with trepidation to meet the great man, and began, "Papa has sent me with——"

"Before you tell me what business you are come on," Mr. Dillingborough interrupted her, with a polite and deferential voice, "let me thank

you, my dear Miss Isabel, for coming to see me. It is very kind of you, for I have no friends with me, and for the last fortnight I have been a solitary."

Mr. Dillingborough was a widower, with two children, a son and a daughter. His son, Captain Dillingborough, R.N., was a member of parliament, and resided almost always in or near London; his daughter had married (which her brother had not), and was abroad with her husband who held a high diplomatic appointment in the south of Europe.

"But I don't think I will be so grateful to you, till I have first called you to account," resumed Mr. Dillingborough, gallantly. "Why have you not been to see me for these last fourteen days? You see I keep an accurate list of my lonely days."

"Papa has been in London," Isabel answered, evidently pleased with the compliment, "so he has not been at home to send me, and so—I had nothing to come for."

"Nothing to come for! Nothing to come for!" was the playful answer. "Is that the most flattering reply you can make to my telling how glad I am to see you?"

"Of course I should have liked to come," Isabel corrected herself quickly and with simplicity; "I always like very much to come. But I did not, because I knew your time to be always fully occupied, and I was afraid of your——"

"Afraid of me!" exclaimed Mr. Dillingborough, again wilfully taking a wrong meaning.

Isabel was uneasy at the banter. "Please, Mr. Dillingborough," she petitioned, "do not misunderstand me. Do not take wrongly what I mean rightly."

"I do not misunderstand you, my dear child," said the old man, gently, and looking earnestly at her. "I understand you; and you are a very good girl."

"I try to be so," Isabel said, in a whisper.

"But come," Mr. Dillingborough said, in an altered voice, after a pause; "don't you bring anything besides that parcel and note? Have you no message from any of my young friends?—Have you no love from Agnes?"

"Oh, yes," Isabel answered, with a good merry laugh, that made her companion's eyes sparkle. "She told me to ask you to come over to Kilverton, and kiss her. She says she likes being kissed by you, because you do not rub her face with your prickly chin, as papa does."

The rector laughed. "The little rogue!—Tell her I will avail myself of the invitation."

He now opened the note, and read it, and broke the seal of the packet. After glancing at its contents, he put it aside, and said, "Now, Isabel, if you have rested sufficiently after your walk, you must come with me and inspect my flowers which have got on prodigiously since you saw them last. And you shall tell me if my gardener is doing as he ought."

While speaking, he rose and opened the French window, and let in the fresh air from the garden. Isabel rose also, and followed him out of the house. After taking a turn or two on the lawn, remarking on the general aspect of the grounds, the beds brightening into blossom, and the trees bursting into greener and more luxuriant foliage, they went into the conservatories, where the most gorgeous and odoriferous exotics were ablaze with every variety of brilliant hue.

The Rector and Isabel were both fond of flowers, and understood horticulture, so they had ample material for conversation.

When they had looked at and approved everything, Mr. Dillingborough took a knife from his pocket, and proceeded to cut a bouquet for his visitor. So liberally disposed was he, that Isabel, when she had watched him for some minutes culling all the choicest bunches of blossom, was forced to exclaim against his prodigality. " You may not give me so many

and such fine ones—you'll leave none for yourself."

"They are not finer than you deserve," was the quiet answer.

"But I shall not be able to carry them."

"Then the gardener shall."

When the bouquet was completed and tied up by Mr. Dillingborough's own hands, in the most artistic manner, Isabel took it with many thanks, and prepared to depart.

"Must you leave me so soon?"

"I may not stop any longer. It will take me an hour to walk home, and papa will not like me to be late at our one-o'clock dinner."

"Well, I hope the exercise of returning will do you as much good as that of coming here has done—the morning's 'out' has brightened you." And then, after a pause, he added deliberately, not at all as if paying a compliment, but as if he were speaking to himself; "You are very, very beautiful—very, very beautiful."

Isabel extended her hand to him. He took it, pressed it affectionately to his lips, and said, "Farewell, my little sunlight."

Isabel, on her way home, had plenty to think about. She turned over in her mind all that she and the Rector had said (for the bulk of their conversation has, of course, not been transcribed); how he had told her what a joy his son was to him, and how he hoped she would one day know more of Captain Dillingborough; how he had responded to her question of whether he thought there were flowers in heaven, by saying that he doubted not there were, if they were calculated to add to the happiness of the blessed; and how he had begged her not to be fourteen days again without coming to see him. Then she determined what she would do with her flowers; that they should be put in state in a certain china basin, for which she had a great respect, in the centre of the drawing-room table, with the exception of a few for her father's dressing room, and just a wee

sprig she would reserve for her [own toilet-table.

She was a few seconds late at dinner, but her father was not angry. "Never mind, my dear," he said, in answer to her apologies; "never mind. It's a long distance, and doubtless you found Mr. Dillingborough very entertaining." But, just to maintain discipline, the Captain told her to take pains with her carriage, and be careful how she held her shoulders. "Now the right shoulder is about an eighth of an inch higher than the other—and it's a leetle, just a eetle, stuck forward."

Isabel made the required alterations.

"Ah, that's better—very much better. It's a matter of no small importance, I can assure you. If a girl doesn't know how to hold herself as a girl, it's ten to one she won't know how to conduct herself when she is a woman. Frank! if ever I see you again put your knife into your mouth, I'll read the riot-act over you, and teach you what it is to disobey your father's commands."

Immediately after the repast, the Captain said he must walk over his farm, and "see his men." He had on his forty acres of land only two men, and certain very juvenile members of humanity ; but to hear him talk of taking his men on, and putting them off, made the listener think him the employer of an indefinite number of servants.

In the evening of that day, after the children had retired to bed, under the protection of their mother, and when Isabel, having seated herself in a good position near the lamp, whereat her father was reading a newspaper, had opened her new book on Australian grasses, she was startled by the Captain laying down his paper, and saying he wished to speak to her on a very important subject.

"I have been spending this afternoon with our dear friend, Mr. Dillingborough."

Isabel looked frightened.

"Don't be alarmed, Isabel."

"He is not angry with me about anything?"

"No, no. Come and have some secret talk with me."

He rose, and putting his arm round her waist, led her to a sofa in a darkened corner of the room.

"Dear father, what is it?"

He spoke to her in a low tone, and she listened, without moving, to his words. "What!" she cried with astonishment, when she had heard all; "what! to be his wife?"

"Surely. Do you love him?"

"Oh, very much," she answered, in a bewildered manner.

"How much?" enquired the father, with a smile.

"Almost as much as I do you."

"You must love him more than that."

"So I shall—now it's right," Isabel replied, earnestly. "But what am I to do? What have I done that all this should happen to me? I am not fit. I am not worthy! He is so very good! And I to be so exalted!"

The tears came very fast to her relief, as she threw herself on her father ; and he, taking her in his arms, nursed her and comforted her as he had often done when she was a baby.

CHAPTER III.

ISABEL'S NEW FRIEND.

THE children, on being informed that their sister Isabel was engaged, and was about to be married, and to be no less a person than the Honourable Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough, expressed their delight or surprise in various speeches which their mother cherishes to this day. Tommy, whose mature years had given him certain vague notions of property, exclaimed, "Hurrah ! then the carriage and horses, and all the other things, will be ours." Frank took an opportunity to sidle up to his sister, and to say, with a beseeching smile, "I suppose, Bel, dear,

you'll let me ride on the pony?" Little Agnes thought over the intelligence in silence for many hours, and eventually remarked, "Isabel going to be Mr. Dillingborough's wife!—how funny! I wonder if her hair will turn white." On being asked what she meant, the young lady responded curtly, and somewhat sullenly, "Why, his is!"

The news created much more commotion within the walls of Witherstone. Honestly, the members of that community did not like their Captain's undreamt-of elevation. It was a social step above them, which he had no business to have taken. Fancy that little Isabel going to be one of the aristocracy! Latent jealousies sprung forth and burgeoned, and the Captain's dynasty was in danger. Mr. Garbidge, now grown an old and feeble man—almost, in fact, grown into a coffin—was the only person in the town at all pleased. He indeed chuckled over his acuteness, and said, "What did I tell you from the first?" The ladies generally were

very indignant with what they were pleased to call the Rector's forgetfulness of his dignity, and they were equally infuriated with the artful scheming and heartlessness of Captain Potter. Mrs. Pringle, who led the more fashionable ladies, in all matters of morality and social decorum, was vehement. "How could he have the ordinary feelings of a father, and compel that poor child to marry a man old enough to be her great-grandfather?"

But this Dr. Pringle could not allow. He remembered the fees Captain Potter had paid him at the birth of Isabel, and at the birth of each of the other four children; he recollected the profitable attendance he made on the first Mrs. Potter during her dying illness, how he had seen the Captain's entire family through croup and measles, and how he might, if he did not waver in his allegiance, protect them through the dangers of whooping-cough and scarletina.

"Mrs. Pringle," the doctor cried energetically, "this I cannot allow; Potter has been my firm

friend, and my fast friend ;”—(the doctor did not use *fast* in an immoral sense)—“and I won’t hear envy carping at him without proclaiming my sentiments. Potter is a gallant fellow. He has served his country in the field of battle. His blood has been shed—”

“Yes, my dear,” put in Mrs. Pringle tartly—
“when you have bled him.”

“And I do verily believe,” continued the doctor, not noticing the interruption, and throwing a thrilling solemnity into his voice—“*And I do verily believe*, if there is one man on earth who has a stern sense of duty, it is Godfrey Potter.”

“I am sure he manifests it, my dear,” put in Mrs. Pringle with a small excoiating laugh—
“by the way in which he performs his *duty* to his daughter.”

“Madam,” screamed the doctor, “I order you to be silent. I will not hear such observations from your lips, with regard to a man who has fought England’s battles—has been mentioned

in Wellington's despatches, and has braved death, and won glory, at the cannon's mouth.' And the doctor went into such a lively rage, that Mrs. Pringle, fearing he might work himself into an apoplexy, like a dutiful wife changed her opinions, and set about arguing to the Witherstone public in favour of the Captain and the impendent wedding.

In the county the excitement was very great. There were more than two ladies in the land who had employed all their charms and talents to accomplish that which Isabel had undesignedly achieved. Indeed, the Rector had been the veritable bull's-eye at many an archery party—a fish that had been baited with every fly that artifice had invented. Widows had raced for him neck and neck—and so had maiden ladies whom mature years had taught to appreciate the bliss of unwedded life. “Who is this Captain Potter?” they exclaimed haughtily. But that was very absurd, for every one knew the Captain; he permeated the entire county

on his bay charger, dropping in to lunch (according to his promise to Sir Ellerton Knyvett) at every house in turn ;—he was the grand newsduct of the region which he traversed, discharging many of the functions of the postman and the classic herald. One of the Rector's suitors cried hysterically—"He might have married a lady, but he has chosen—a Potter."

Captain Dillingborough was certainly not pleased with the letter that announced his father's intention to marry again. He was offended with it on more grounds than one. For matrimony, under any circumstances, he had no profound veneration ; but that a man should marry for a second time, and after he had entered on old age, appeared to him an indication of mental imbecility. He considered the fact as clearly proving that his parent's mind was fast approaching decay. Had his father taken to hunting in pink, or made his appearance at St. James's in a cardinal's hat, the Captain would not have more commiserated his con-

dition. The son pitied his poor father ; and with him, pitying a Dillingborough was the same as being ashamed of him.

Moreover, Captain Dillingborough reflected that his father's income was only for his life, and that his accumulated property, though it was estimated by the knowing in such matters as considerable, would not be a very satisfactory estate for him (Captain Dillingborough, M.P.) to inherit, if a fresh family had to be provided for out of it. But none of these considerations escaped the Captain's lips, either to his father or to any of his personal friends ; for, as a son, he did not think it dutiful or prudent to expostulate with his father on the subject ; and as to imparting his feelings to others, his pride would not allow him to prattle about the misalliances any of the Dillingboroughs might make.

In spite of rumour which represented Isabel as an unwilling sacrifice to worldly ambition, never was there girl married in a more complete stupor of love. The more passionate

powers of her heart and imagination had never been called into play by literature, (for poetry and trash her father had never permitted her to read) nor had they been aroused by society, for she had not an intimate friend beyond her father's walls. That good Mr. Dillingborough who examined her for confirmation, who gave so liberally to the poor, who was so very, very good ; that handsome, courtly Mr. Dillingborough, who paid her so much attention, and for whom her father had such an earnest admiration—was the man she adored. He was priest and king to her. On receiving his offer, the difference in their ages had never occurred to her ; nor had she wasted a thought on it till little Agnes reminded her that his hair was white, and hers was not.

The wedding ceremony was duly performed at Kilverton, in the month of August following the proposal. It was very unostentatiously managed; the Dean of Brandon came over to officiate, and Captain Dillingborough came down from town to be present on the inauspicious occasion—and

these, with two young ladies, slight acquaintances of Isabel's, who discharged the offices of bridesmaids, were the only guests invited to attend. None of the Witherstone people were asked to come and rejoice,—but they were not uninformed of the Kilverton arrangements.

Captain Dillingborough was distantly polite and cordially frigid to his new mamma, who was not slow to feel the chill of his manner, and instinctively to perceive that it was the sincere language of his heart. He, however, thought he behaved admirably, and rendered most honourably all service due for the one thousand pounds which his father had presented to him a few days previously, as a token of affection, and a sign that his interests were not to suffer from the great event. Isabel also received shortly before her marriage a letter from Lady Angerfield, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's daughter, who was residing abroad. It commenced in the anticipatory form, with "My dearest Mamma," and concluded with "Your

affectionate daughter, Julia Angerfield ;” still it was a formal production, and did not afford much satisfaction to Isabel, who was compelled to reflect that its writer was fifteen years her senior.

- In all probability, she would not have been more gratified by the billet, had she known it was, like Captain Dillingborough’s formal urbanity, only the receipt in full for a thousand pounds her scrupulously just and very indulgent father had sent her.

The Rector took his young wife abroad for their wedding excursion, first up the Rhine, and then to Florence, considering, with patriarchal kindness, that it would be good for her unformed mind to see something of foreign countries. They returned to England before Christmas, and taking possession of the Rector’s pastoral residence, a grave, but somewhat magnificent house, in a retired square, nigh Westminster Abbey, entered into society—a grand, decorous, and not over-lively society,—which to Isabel’s unsophisticated mind was one unbroken whirl of dissipation. Isabel was presented to her Majesty by

the Duchess of Balbriggan, causing no slight sensation, by her beauty, amongst the radiant lovelinesses of St. James's—and not a little gossip and prattling laughter in the clubs, whose members were amused by the contrast between her and her venerable husband. And she had to receive visitors—only at small and quiet parties, however; and very grateful was she that they were small and quiet. A life of great effort, full of trials she had not thought of during the tumultuous days of wooing, was this exalted existence.

At first she was painfully ignorant of the topics of conversation, and could not command the society tone her new acquaintances possessed. She was also very sensitive at being the mark of much observation and curiosity which, under the circumstances, were natural enough, but pained her as much as if they had been impertinent and expressed with ill-breeding. Some of the ladies who made her acquaintance were biting ceremony, and let her see they

offered attention to the Dillingborough family, and not to her : even her beauty did not mollify these haughty dames. The only person who displayed any warmth of affection to her was Lady Crayford, a niece of the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's. Very handsome and elegant, though nigh forty, and inclined to *embonpoint*, with a reckless, defiant, almost insolent pride in her dark eyes, was this Lady Crayford. Isabel did not at all like her the first time she saw her, and positively shuddered as she heard her pour forth her taunts and sarcasm on men and things, like red-hot nails and ragged pieces of cast-iron. Her ladyship had no establishment in town, but was spending a few weeks with members of the Dillingborough clan in Eaton Square ; and she paid several visits to her child-aunt, as she was pleased to call Isabel to her face.

“ I am going to Wolton to-morrow, and have only three minutes for you, but I would come to say good-bye to you,” she said one morning, running into Isabel's drawing-room. “ My chil-

dren have been enjoying themselves very much in my absence, and Lord Crayford has been positively happy ; but it is necessary that I return, to keep up appearances, and prevent our neighbours from declaring I and my lord are separated."

" I hope I shall see you in the country. Wolton Hall is not more than thirty miles from Brandon."

" Not twenty ; but there is a gulf between the two places that you won't be able to swim over—a good turbulent feud. Uncle Harrie won't speak to Lord Crayford."

" Whose fault is it ?"

" Nobody's. Of course it is not mine, and *of course* it is not my husband's, and of course not yours. Why, the simple truth is, my husband is a ranter, preaches in the fields, and is a good man in a very sinful way, so my uncle—that is, your husband—won't know him."

" And he has not quarrelled with you ?"

" Bless me, no ! people never break with

those they are afraid of. He does not love me, but he does what is next best—he fears me. You think it strange I should keep on terms with a man who does not approve of Lord Crayford's proceedings? Well, perhaps you are right. But in all other respects I am an exemplary wife. You should see me at Wolton! But then—there is no merit in honouring such a man as my lord.”

“Don't gibe so,” Isabel said, quickly. “And never again to me speak so—so disrespectfully of your uncle.”

“There, now, aunt, you are exquisitely lovely; do always be angry.”

But Lady Crayford stopped short in her banter as she saw the expression of Isabel's face. The eyes of it were bright, but not with tears (for Isabel had since her marriage learnt the art of restraining them, albeit her heart did not glow less frequently), and the lips of it were working very threateningly.

“Isabel, don't be angry. Forgive me, my

dear girl, I was very wrong," cried her ladyship, kissing the indignant lips as she spoke. And then she added very earnestly, "I did not mean to vex you; but I have lived so many years in the habit of knocking people about, that I forget all are not made of wood."

Aunt Harrie Dillingborough returned the embrace with a vehemence the sincerity of which could not be questioned.

"Isabel," continued her friend, "you're a noble-hearted girl. Do try to think well of me, and love me; you'll hear much to my discredit that is not true, for ill luck has given me even more enemies than I have made. I admire you very much, and I feel for your troubles, which must be not a few. You are in a strange position; but keep a good heart, and your lot will not be an unhappy one—anyhow, brighter than mine. I can't remain with you now, so let me kiss you once more, and I'll go."

Isabel was not sorry when she was informed by her husband that they were to leave London

for Brandon without delay. The transit was made, so that the first anniversary of the day on which Mr. Dillingborough proposed to her, was spent in their house in the cathedral-yard of Brandon. Isabel was charmed with the place at first sight, and she grew to love it dearly—more and more—year by year. The picturesque High Street, with the antique town-hall standing with its projecting gables supported by pillars—the cheerful little squares, green with trees—the smart, bright shops, and the merry clatter of the busy parts of the city, gratified her scarcely less than did the grand, old cathedral, on which ages had looked. The front windows of her house commanded a good view of the sacred building, and at the back of it was a spacious garden, encircled by a dark monastic wall, as fresh with green, and as bright with flowers, as the grounds of the Copley Rectory.

They had not established themselves many days at Brandon, when Mr. Dillingborough was obliged to pay a visit to Oxford. Isabel was to

remain at home alone during his absence ; but it so happened, that her period of widowhood was enlivened by a visit from her son. Without any announcement, Captain Dillingborough presented himself in the house—was surprised to find that his father was not at home—had taken it into his head to run down and see him.

The morning after his arrival, he entered the breakfast-parlour at about ten o'clock, and found Isabel in the daintiest of light morning dresses, seated at the table and waiting for him.

Approaching her respectfully, he made an apology for being so late, and taking her proffered hand gave her a filial kiss on her forehead, at which salute the red light mounted to her cheek.

“Any letter from my father this morning, mamma?” enquired he, when he had taken his place at the breakfast board, and received a cup of coffee from her hands.

“None. So we may expect to see him home to-night.”

"It must be very dull for you to be here alone without him."

"I like him, of course, best to be with me. But the time does not hang heavy on my hands, for I have a good deal to do."

"But you can't go out."

"Oh yes—to the cathedral. I have been there this morning."

"Do you often attend the early service?"

"Every morning, since I have been here, I have been at it. I like it so very much; the music and the prayers soothe and compose me for the day."

"Do you then rise from your pillow in a tumultuous state?" As he put this last question, he smiled in his best way, endeavouring to garb his contemptuousness in polite humour—very ineffectually.

Isabel did not answer, but contented herself with staring at him with her large dark eyes that had lost much of their timid expression, and acquired an air of pensiveness.

They talked but little for the next half hour, and that little was about the contents of the newspapers ; and then, breakfast concluded, Isabel opened the glass door of the apartment, and invited her son to walk out with her in that green, leafy, bright tree garden, which, it has already been said, was at the back of the house.

Isabel was by no means without energy of character, and now she was about to display it. She was in a strange land, and amongst strange people, and she longed to make herself loved in it and by them. A want of sympathy impelled her to talk frankly to her husband's son, and show him how she needed and deserved affection.

Bowing an acceptance of her invitation, he followed her into the garden, where a warm sun was quickening the vegetation.

Captain Dillingborough was a man who had made something of a reputation. Using the navy, like our friend, Captain Mugglestoneleugh,

“as a convenience,” he had acquired sufficient distinction in it to make it sure, that, with his powerful friends, he would be employed whenever he wished—that is, whenever an opportunity for high advancement occurred. He had invented some improvements in the appliances of men-of-war, which the Admiralty had adopted; a fact, which, if it did not speak much for the merit of the inventions, said a great deal for his influence. Handsome and distinguished in person, even for his singularly handsome family. Stern to his inferiors, haughty to his equals, reserved to the great, yet courted and even popular. With a snaky coldness in his eye, and a snaky cunning in his lips. Polished and keen as a sword, and with scarce more feeling; yet gifted with winning ways when it was his humour to please. With just enough heart to be an accomplished voluptuary, and a master of selfishness. Looking on high-born dullards as one with the common herd of the ignoble, and looking on the common herd—not with con-

tempt, but regarding them as valuable, inasmuch as they were useful machines to greatness. Waiting patiently till the time came for him to strike, and make his name great ; and in the meantime amusing himself with his passions, toying with them, critically admiring them as we might a cage of tigers, and running no more risk of being hurt by them than the stone does of bleeding under the knife it sharpens. Such was Captain Dillingborough, M.P., from whom Isabel wanted sympathy and support !

Fancy the ivy saying to the oak, " Come down, for I want to embrace you !" and fancy the oak obeying.

" You asked me just now, if my life was such a tumultuous one that I stood in especial need of the consolations of religion. You spoke in mockery—not of me, for I do not think you would wantonly grieve me, but of those sacred subjects which ought to be very precious to us. Perhaps it is not a tempest driving me to pray for deliverance from danger, but a fear that my

weakness may not be equal to manage my vessel in the calm, that inclines me to be more earnest — more regular in my applications to God.”

Captain Dillingborough looked surprised, but not as if he found Isabel’s words ungrateful.

“This last year,” she continued, after a brief silence, “has been a very important one to me. I am much older than I was a few months since, when you saw me at Kilverton, on my wedding-day. Of course, all girls are made much wiser by marriage, gain larger and startling views of life, and quickly acquire new opinions—some yielding nothing but pleasure, some saddening. This has been peculiarly my case. I was very young when your father told me he loved me. I knew nothing of the world, had read hardly anything, had never formed an attachment for any being out of my own family, with the exception of your father; him I loved—as I now know the world will never give me credit for. He was my spiritual guide whom I had

ever been instructed to venerate ; he, from my earliest childhood, displayed a tender care for me, and—as I do him now—he loved me. I was an unsophisticated child, had scarce read a novel, had never been to a ball or theatre, or heard a line of Byron ; but I have of late acquired much information in the forms and the errors of life.”

“ And not in the virtues ? ”

“ Yes—yes : I would not have you misunderstand me. If my words are despondent and bitter, I would not have them imply what you suggest. There is—there must be—goodness in the world ; but virtue is more frequently crowned with thorns than I had imagined. Do not think my disposition ungrateful, because I speak dejectedly. There are many difficulties before me that cannot be well overrated, which I saw not in my prospect before I married. It never occurred to me that I should be regarded with supercilious amusement by the society so much higher than my birth entitled me to, into

which my husband has introduced me ; that I should be esteemed as an adventurous intruder into a circle far above me ; or that my husband's children would distrust me, and be jealous of me."

"Do not, do not—" commenced the Captain.

"Nay—you cannot deny that I am speaking as truly as I am sincerely," Isabel checked him by calmly saying. After a pause, she added,—

"Frederick, I beg you not to misconstrue me. I have an unusual career before me—the duties, the trials, the possible usefulness, the rewards of it rise out dimly before me. I am not disheartened—for I am happy in the love of a good man, the only man I ever loved ; — I am hopeful for the future,—but I shall require the encouragement and regard your father's children can give me."

"My dear mamma—do not doubt my good will towards you. In me you shall always find the observance of all that dutious affection which a son ought to bear to a mother."

"It cannot be. You are not my son ; it would

be impossible to make you look on me as your mother ; it would be easier for you to feel that I am your child," Isabel replied with a sad smile. "Have confidence in me as your friend. That is sufficient dignity for me. A tremor of fear runs through me when you gravely call me 'mamma.' It sounds like heartless ridicule."

She was very earnest in her appeal ; and as she concluded, her words were hurried, as if she were on the point of sobbing.

Frederick Dillingborough was affected. Commiseration for the perplexity of the young creature by his side, admiration of her exquisite grace, approval of her courage in so addressing him, and of the tact with which she did it, recognition of her good sound intelligence, her simplicity, her excellence of intention, and of her helplessness, compelled him to pass sentence on her mentally to this effect,—“What a noble child it is ! how hard that she should suffer so for the folly of *my* father, and the wretched knavery of *hers* !”

Taking up the hand which she had placed beseechingly on his arm, he kissed it, saying,—
“ We must learn to appreciate each other. I have not as yet done you justice, but I will learn to do so—and you will not be unfair in your judgment of me.”

From that time Isabel and her new friend got on easy terms with each other ; he manifesting in a hundred appropriate forms deference to her, and she not being slow to respond. He began to write to her occasionally—chatty letters of family news, such as he knew would be acceptable ; and this line of conduct, on the part of his son, pleased no little the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, who rejoiced at what he termed “ this cementing of family ties.”

Summer passed, autumn came, and ere winter had arrived, Isabel went through that state which men are prone to speak of with levity, and ladies are so egotistical as to term “ interesting,” and became the mother of the sweetest, loveliest little boy the Dillingboroughs had ever produced. If

ever there has been an exultingly triumphant father, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, with his eyes raining down over his manly, vigorous old face, as he gazed on the child of his old age, was one.

The boy was born in Brandon, in which place also the christening was celebrated. Frederick Dillingborough was present at these festivities, having come down from town for that purpose.

"Frederick," said Isabel, in the chamber to which she had taken the Captain on the evening of his arrival to see her child, sleeping soundly and cosily—"I said you could not be my son.—But you can be my boy's brother."

CHAPTER IV.

EVERITT BROOKBANK.

It is in the early days of September, and that sweltering hot weather prevails, which usually opens September in England in a not positively intolerable degree, but which is only found in its demoniacal intensity across the channel, and there roasts and parches no plain, from Normandy to the Mediterranean, with more delight than it does the arid sandy level from which springs Paris—one vast, magnificent fountain, sparkling in the sun. There is a slight breeze stirring, but it comes straight from the mouth of an unseen furnace, and instead of bringing refreshment, serves only

to raise the fine dust from the ground, mingling it with the air which men must breathe—or die. What little grass there is around Paris has denied its own vegetation, and taken upon itself the torpid aspect of used-up and pulled-out door-mat. A jet of water darting forth from a griffin's mouth is a cruel sarcasm, a mechanical gibe, at the operations of nature.

Why do not the Parisians keep within doors, or, as it is Sunday, attend service in the churches, and retire from them along the shady sides of the streets, to pass the remainder of the day with their families? Why, now that the flowers are unable to enjoy themselves, and stinging insects buzz venomously about thirsting for blood, do smart grisettes (as they mayn't now-a-days be called) and their appropriate cavaliers, flow out from every court, and street, and by-way, on their way to one particular route of omnibuses, and one particular railway station? Why are the boulevards near the Madeleine, the Rue de Rivoli, and the Place de la Concorde in such

commotion, with hundreds of people running over each other, (to get places on the omnibuses that are in sight, and cannot accommodate a tithe of those requiring their services) and with gentlemen and ladies bargaining against each other for voitures ; some vociferating in French, some in English, some in neither and both at the same time,—the ladies, in the excitement of the moment, omitting to be feminine, and the gentlemen forgetting to be gallant ? What is it all about ? The fête surely of St. Annette ! of St. Annette, not sixteen miles from the great obelisk, with its wide streets usually deadly calm, but this day to be merry as youth, with its great deserted mansions whose gloomy decay is mocked by the freshness of the grass and evergreens in the courts they encompass ! St. Annette, with its royal palace, its forest, and its fountains ! Ought not every one to be there ?

Mr. Everitt Brookbank is.—Just five-and-twenty ; not much above middle height, but enough so to be remarked on as a fine young

man ; in possession of arms that have within the last few years pulled in the University Boat at Cambridge, and of lithe and muscular legs that have won many a pedestrian hurdle-race ; known honourably amongst his companions, as a well-looking fellow, a good-hearted fellow, a fellow with " something in him," and a first-rate rider ; with curling light hair, and whiskers of the same colour—and perhaps rather too abundant for his not broad face ; something of a dandy, but not much, even on the lips of his detractors ; not wanting in a sufficiently high estimate of himself—but still not over-confident beyond what is allowable in a good fellow with " something in him," at the early and crude age of twenty-five :—such is Mr. Everitt Brookbank.

He is proceeding slowly up the middle of the grand avenue of the fête of St. Annette, drawing himself up to the full measure of his stature ; recognising the fact that nine Frenchmen out of ten do not stand up to the summit of his

shoulder ; allowing the French to be an amusing people—a jolly people—an ingenious and brave people—without a doubt the second people of the world ; estimating the English, in arts, wealth, liberty, social magnificence, mental and physical dignity, as unquestionably the first nation on the face of the earth ; not thinking much about himself, but quite ready to do so ; equally ready to think about any one else needing the aid of honest and kindly thoughts.—Such is the temper of Mr. Everitt Brookbank's mind.

On either side of him are stalls ranged in line under the trees that afford a slight protection from the rays of the sun to the multitudes passing to and fro. It is a variegated assemblage. Stout, middle-aged gentlemen, representing the prosperous Parisian bourgeoisie of the less opulent grades, in costumes adapted to lads bent on killing the hearts of fair ones ; dapper servant-maids with natty caps ; fierce soldiers of many different services and appointments—the majority with crimson breeches not over

fresh in hue ; citizens scarcely less martial in aspect, though in private garb ; peasant matrons with high caps of the finest lace ; girls from the capital, in attire of the extreme fashion, with wicked eyes, and perhaps wicked intentions ; workmen in blue blouses, with their children in their arms ; bands of juveniles in military trappings, playing soldiers as only French children can ; swarms of English sent by the autumn holidays of London to take possession of Paris (deserted by its own proper patrons), amongst whom are ladies of the evangelical school, “ doing at Rome as Rome does,” but lamenting over the superstitious frivolity of their Gallic fellow-creatures ; priests, and sinners of all kinds—form the congregation at which petitions to buy are hurled by vendors of china, sweetmeats, ices, lemonade, comical toys, and haberdashery of the trifling sort.

In the distance, the noise and din of half-a-dozen contending bands, attached to opposition theatres, caravans, and shows, give body and

substance to the confused babble of the bazaar ; and from the town of St. Annette, in the background, comes the vengeful rattan of the barrack drums—parchment asserting the dignity of the law with a vengeance.

“This is frightful desecration of the sabbath, isn’t it?” enquires a voice behind Everitt.

Turning round, our friend finds he has been addressed by a countryman of his own, whose words, dress, and appearance make it difficult to assign him his exact position, social and moral. Slight figure, over forty, perhaps over fifty years of age, thin face, sallow and sunburnt, dim coffee-coloured eyes, and large moustaches of black, crossed by one or two white hairs, are the most remarkable natural points in his appearance. His costume consists of a brown holland suit, white beaver hat, dark cravat, and light gloves.

Twirling his walking-cane round, and turning his dim eyes on Everitt, he quietly repeats his question, with no modulation of voice to indicate either irony or earnestness. “This is a

frightful desecration of the sabbath, isn't it?"

"I haven't arrived at that conclusion yet," responds Everitt, thinking to himself as he speaks—"Um!—the man has the bearing of a gentleman; but he appears a queer fish. A man with a deep veneration for the sabbath doesn't express it by wearing such a suit of sackcloth as he has on. What does he mean by addressing me?—perhaps, he wants me to play with him."

"Haven't you?" rejoins the stranger. "That good lady from Tyburnia, with the pink flounces, has, though. 'How grateful such a scene as this ought to make us for our superior advantages!' I heard her say, as she passed me."

"She ought to be reminded that these fanatics have their days of fasting and mortification, when our enlightened countrymen indulge in what mundane pleasures they can command."

"She is right, though. The comparison is in our favour."

“How?”

“Just look about us. Put what we see here by the side of what we should see at an English fair. Here every husband has his wife with him, and every father brings his babes to take part with him in the holiday. Then we’ve got no drunkenness here—no coarse love-making in beer-booths—no serjeants slipping the Queen’s money into the hands of lads stupified with drink, and so induced to enter the glorious profession of arms, under the free enlistment system.—Hollo! what is the disturbance?”

As Everitt turns in the direction of the noise an enquiring glance, a smile covers his face.

“Ah!—exactly so,” exclaims the unknown.
“There is an establishment where ‘Bass’ and ‘London Stout’ are provided to our national wants, and a party of English gentlemen, who have been cooling themselves with potations, are singing ‘God save the Queen!’—I must go and join in the chorus.”

And away moves the gentleman, and is soon

lost to Everitt in the crowd gathering round the noisy islanders.

Proceeding through the quarter in which the caravans are drawn up, Everitt Brookbank finds himself surrounded, if possible, by a more frolicsome company—certainly by more noise. The din of the rival bands is deafening, most satisfactorily so to a people delighting in music. Whose invitation shall we accept?—shall we visit the extraordinary family, consisting of a giant father, a dwarf mother, and a daughter with white hair down to her heels, and pink eyes, who has never required sustenance from the day of her birth?—or the grand panorama of the achievements of Napoleon?—or the theatre which offers the attractions of a tragedy, a comedy, tight-rope-dancing, and an opera?—or the grand exhibition of the tableaux vivans of the life of our Saviour?—The reader must not tremble with disapprobation, for he is only perusing a page of history.

Looking wistfully and with amusement at the

poor people crowding up the steps, Everitt follows them into the last-named place of entertainment. On the platform, to which the steps lead, are three musicians—a sandy-haired ruffian in a flannel shirt and white trowsers, beating the drum, a brawny woman clashing a huge pair of cymbals, and a pensive, lean boy making a French horn utter such blasts of misery as no instrument of the kind ever before benefitted mankind with. “Just in time!—just in time!” the drummer perseveringly roars, very angry with his own throat because it doesn’t burst.

“Deux sous” is written up in large characters on a yellow placard. But Everitt finds no one ready to receive his two sous for admission. One pays on retiring, after the performance—and then, in satisfaction with the excellent amusement, one pays gratefully. Such is our polite arrangement.

The crush is past;—and seated in the second row from the stage is our adventurer, one of about a hundred and fifty people (of the peasant

class, with only a few exceptions) who, densely packed and impatient of the suffocating atmosphere, are clamouring for the curtain to be drawn up.

Their wishes are complied with. The drum, cymbals, and horn on the platform come to terms of pacification, and the green drop ascends.

Scene 1.—Our Saviour 'in his infancy.—A pretty little boy, with ruddy cheeks, and flaxen curls, sitting on a stool, and habited in a short white muslin frock, with a pink sash.

The curtain drops, amid loud applause.

“May I trouble you for a match, for my pipe is out?” asks a common soldier politely of Everitt, who has previously accommodated some smokers from his box of cigar-lights. Mr. Brookbank bows as he complies with the request, and then occupies himself with watching two companions on the bench before him.—One is a feeble, sickly little boy, in the dress of poverty, whose thin hand is in the grasp of the other;—which other, is a withered old woman

who, together with dirt, and bleared eyes, and palsy, shocks humanity.—Out for the enjoyment of the fête that was so delectable when she was a girl is that unfortunate creature, ripe for the pauper's coffin that ought also to contain the grandchild, or great-grandchild, she has with her.

Scene 2. Scene 3. Scene 4. And they all have their quantum of applause.

Then comes the agony in the garden, the sandy-haired drummer personating the Son of God.

The spectators are saddened.

The Crucifixion is the next tableau,—a rude imitation of the human figure being discovered, on the rising of the curtain, nailed to a cross.

“Clap your hands ! applaud ! applaud !” cries the drummer, sticking his head in from the platform.

No one obeys him.—And the curtain once more drops.

“Clap your hands ! applaud ! applaud !”

again vociferates the drummer—this time, indignantly.

But he is unheeded, the silence being the most complimentary response made to his encouragements. Everitt sees tears trickling over the grimy cheeks of the palsied old woman,—and then he sees her clutch to her bosom the sickly child who is with her.

“Don’t be sad,” says Everitt, comforting her.

“*He* died for me! *He* died for me!” she sobs in answer, crossing herself devoutly.—Nor is hers the only disturbed heart in the rude, untutored assembly; for Everitt, looking behind him, sees many a tearful eye, and then hears many a stifled cry.

Once more the curtain ascends;—but this time, the blasphemy (!) being at an end, the object is to create a diversion of feeling. A dirty and repulsive dwarf of middle age, very stout, and dressed in regimentals, runs about the stage, assuring the public that he is no other than the celebrated General Tom Thumb.

“Clap your hands! Clap your hands!” screams the drummer.

At length he has no reason to complain of the mournfulness of his house, for the clapping, and laughter, and shouts of satisfaction would have astonished the architects of Babel.

“’Tis better than a page of Voltaire,” says a small sneering voice behind Everitt. “Joy cometh in the morning.”

“Oh! it is you—is it?” says Everitt with a sad smile, as he recognizes his friend of the brown holland costume.

“Have you no sympathy with your kind?—Why do not you rejoice with the rest?”

“That old woman keeps my grave face in countenance,” Everitt responds. “Her eyes are still wet.”

“Poor old fool! You see, she is the only one of the party whose faculties can be said to be on the wane from the effects of age.”

“Don’t speak so; you pain me, though you give pleasure to yourself.”

“Come! come!—don’t follow the poor body as she hobbles up the ladder to the open air;—you must not permit yourself to be enamoured of her.”

The two ascend the steps, and after having deposited their two sous each in the drummer’s hat on the platform, walk down into the fair together.

“She knows what I trust we may when our last time is come,” says Everitt, gravely.

“She knows a good deal, I grant you. The great doctrine of the Egyptians is hers, and that is more than the Pagan could prove. By Jove! what an age we live in! A hag from the back streets of St. Annette bears away the bell from Plato.”

“Because *she believes*.”

“Assuredly—and quite right too—it’s all she is fit for. But I must be cautious, or you’ll be reproaching me again. Let us, if you have nothing better to do, anticipate the mob, and on the hill there, commanding a view of the

fountains that will be playing in the course of half-an-hour, smoke a placid cigar, and discuss the merits of something deep and out-of-the-way. I have a case of the most delicate regalias."

There is a certain tempered humour in the manner in which this invitation is given, that renders it impossible for Everitt to refuse it ; so, nodding assent to his new acquaintance, he turns with him to ascend the hill.

"Here we are, and a tree to shade us. Now for the cigars ; now for the lights ;—and now we are all right."

"Are you staying long in Paris ? I suppose not ?" enquires Everitt.

"You think I am too fashionable a man to be able to find amusement in it, with the great world away, and English shop-keepers blocking up all the avenues of the Palais Royal. I do not wrong your good opinion, for I am in Paris against my will, just now."

"I am concluding a two months' holiday up the Rhine, and into Switzerland, with ten days

in Paris, which is, after all, the place for real abandonment to pleasure, beyond any other city I am acquainted with. By day and by night, when the blue sky is above its white architecture, and when it is blazing with millions of lights like one great garden of lamps, I like it," says Everitt, enthusiastically; and then, with delightful egotism, attributing his own objects of interest to his friend, he goes on: "The theatres are capital just now. Have you seen the new comedy, at the Théâtre du Vaudeville? It is magnificent."

"I hear it is good, and Hutin does his part to perfection; but I have not seen it."

"I advise you then not to delay. You have, *of course*, looked in at the New Opera, in the Opéra Comique?"

"No, I have not."

"How strange! I fancied the whole world was rushing to it. But, perhaps, you have not been long in Paris?"

"Rather more than two months.—But how

does Marie look in the piece ? The journals are in raptures ; but then they always are."

"Divinely. 'Tis impossible for words to tell how sweetly she smiles, and the fresh, timid humour of her manner as she points each new audacity ;—and then her exquisite voice !—I had the honour of being introduced to her only last night by a friend who wrote the little piece now being performed at the Théâtre des Variétés."

This last announcement is made in a tone of modest pride.

A smile on the lips of Everitt's companion is scarcely concealed by his thick moustache, as he says—"There are queer stories afloat about that girl. I wonder if they are true."

"To learn that they are false, you have only to watch her face which is the silent language of innocence and simplicity," says Everitt, warmly.

"I should enjoy seeing this earthly elysium of yours in a state of insurrection," remarks the unknown, shifting the conversation. "To my

melo-dramatic tastes, another reign of terror would be a charming spectacle."

"God grant you may not be gratified!"

"I am afraid I shall not be: though, unless I am widely mistaken, there will be a revolution in the country before two years are over. This citizen-king cannot stand."

"And what then?"

"For a limited number of months the people will be perfectly rapturous with their newly-acquired liberty; then they will grow dissatisfied with their poverty; and will proceed to exercise tyranny over each other, and to violate every rule of common sense and humanity."

"And what then?"

"Some man, with the army devoted to him, will shoot them down right and left, and govern the survivors by fear."

"The French are not slaves, to be driven by the lash," says Everitt, warmly. "They are as brave as the English, though less fortunate in most other respects."

“And take our brave English! Suppose a commander-in-chief, with the army devoted to him, were in such a political crisis as we are proposing for the French, to march his troops up to London, and from Threadneedle Street to Buckingham Palace were to proclaim himself king, with gunpowder not unaccompanied with ball? How many of those brave subjects of Queen Victoria, who go down to the city daily in omnibuses, or with umbrellas, would resist?”

“They would fight—even with their umbrellas.”

“I should like to see them,” is the rejoinder which is followed by a laugh.

Everitt and the stranger continue their conversation for more than an hour, the former uttering his generous crudities with that frankness and energy which are amiable, and not uncommon features in a “young fellow with something in him;” and the latter managing to arouse his associate’s interest and, in some slight

degree, admiration, by an apparently careless display of much knowledge of books, different nations, and the bad of mankind.

“ I must be returning to Paris,” says Everitt, after the fountains have ceased to play. “ I have engaged to meet a friend at a theatre, and sup with him afterwards.”

“ You told me half an hour since, you thought of visiting some places beyond the barriers to-morrow night. Let me prevail on you to change your mind. Come to me instead, and I’ll engage to give you such a night of adventure as you never before had in Paris.”

“ I’ll gladly do so. Where shall we meet? and at what time?”

“ Can’t you come early to my hotel and dine with me—at six o’clock? Two friends will be with me, to whom I shall have great pleasure in introducing you. They will have to leave early, for it is rumoured they have engagements at half-past eight o’clock at the Opera Comique;

but that, of course, is a scandal on the young ladies. You comply ? Then let us exchange addresses, to prevent mistakes."

" Lord Brigden !" exclaims Everitt, with astonishment, looking at the card which his lordship has given him.

" The same. I see you have heard of me ;— no wonder, for my reputation is what the ladies call notorious."

" I know of you as the most daring and brilliant cavalry officer England has."

" And the greatest sinner also."

Everitt corroborates the statement by blushing a little.

" And may I ask you if you are related to the Somersetshire Brookbanks ?"

" Sir George is my uncle ; and from the recent death of my cousin," answers Everitt, raising a hand to his black hat-band, " I am heir to the baronetcy."

" And to a large estate also, I hope."

" Alas ! no. Old Sir George's death will not

give me six hundred pounds a-year, and my father is not a rich man."

"I know how to pity you. I, Viscount Brigden, of the peerage of Ireland, and all we have just a minute ago stated besides, was born to the like hard fate—rank without adequate wealth; and it ruined me. What is there for a poor nobleman to accomplish, in these sluggish times of peace, that can be designated honourable?"

"Art."

"Pish!"

"He can learn to do good."

"That's the cant on every young man's lips, now-a-days; but I don't see that their lives illustrate their doctrine. But you may not tarry here, if you are bent on keeping your engagement this evening. Farewell, till six o'clock to-morrow evening."

Viscount Brigden had, as he well knew, a bad reputation, and, as he also knew, he deserved it, from which latter piece of information he drew much the same comfort that a rogue does

in the consciousness that no one misled him, but that he went wrong of his own accord. Entering the army when he was a boy of sixteen years, and bore the unadorned name of Charles Bellamy, he saw some sharp service before '15, being severely wounded in a dashing cavalry charge made by the English at Waterloo. A few years subsequent to the peace, he succeeded to the family honours, quitted the service, and entered, still beardless, into London society, to which he was favourably introduced by the notoriety of a duel in which he had shot an Imperial Officer of distinction. With an estate of not more than a thousand a-year, he dressed as well as Brummel, and soon became known in what were then called the best circles. But polite drawing-rooms by no means occupied all his care, for he was the boon associate of those sprightly young noblemen who in the days of the Regency fought butchers in Smithfield Market, drove their horses at full swing down the foot-pavements of London's principal streets,

and every now and then, out of a pure spirit of philanthropy, gave all the hackney-coachmen in the West End strong drink *ad libitum*, and the privilege of treating their acquaintance. But it was remarked by wary observers, that the young Lord Brigden took care that none of the folly he promoted should recoil on himself. At Epsom, Ascot, and in gambling-houses, it was noticed that, however the members of his lordship's set were fleeced, he himself was never a great sufferer. Some were charitable enough to say that his hands were not pure of his brothers' blood, and that the heartless selfishness he displayed in the midst of his follies would have done credit to Shylock. Year by year the unfortunate of those fast young nobles dropped away beggared, or with cruelly curtailed means, to die abroad, or be model country gentlemen residing on their encumbered estates; but Lord Brigden, with poverty, still kept up the game. Then, there were some proceedings in Chancery, which brought to light transactions that most

certainly his lordship did not intend should form material for public discussion. Whispers that he had virtually committed murder, and had really plundered an unlucky family of orphans, obtained general credence. Availing himself of a fit opportunity, he essayed a defence of his character in the House of Commons ; but honourable members on both sides refused to listen to him, and silenced him with contemptuous laughter and cries of "silence !" He would fain have called out every individual of that honourable assembly, and even debated whether he should not. This *esclandre* had only just ceased to be a novelty, when a divorce suit in high life again displayed Lord Brigden in no favourable light. He went abroad for awhile ; returned, and hovered about town under a cloud ; once more left England, and was not heard of again by the masses till his name was coupled with daring achievements in the Indian wars. Revisiting his native country, he was glorified as a star of the greatest magnitude, and in the

numbers of oriental wretches he was reputed to have cut in two with his own sword, his sins were lost sight of by the world.

Everitt did not fail to present himself at the appointed hour at Lord Brigden's hotel, where, in a very elegant apartment, with windows opening towards the Boulevards, he was soon one of the party he had been in general terms told should be there. A very merry party they were, the fun commencing with Everitt's unmistakeable surprise at discovering in one of the ladies his fascinating Marie of the Opera Comique. It was evident to Everitt that his host had not felt bound in honour to withhold from the artless, innocent Marie the praises which had been bestowed on her the day before ; but this created no sense of anger in the lady, or embarrassment in her defender. As the repast proceeded, Marie and Eugenie taking nothing but wine and fruit (for had they not ere long to sing the songs of fairies at the Opera ?)—if Everitt had a cause for dissatisfaction, it arose

from his imperfect acquaintance with French not allowing him to catch all the smart sayings of the other three. But on that score he was not much vexed; for Marie repeatedly interpreted into plain and common words Lord Brigden's *mots*, which, if they were not remarkable for their pure moral tone, were certainly not destitute of polish and wit.

The next day Everitt woke at half-an-hour past noon; and immediately consciousness and daylight dawned upon him, he racked his brains to recal the transactions of the previous evening. He was in his own bed-room—but how he had reached it? by whose assistance? where he had been last, before sinking down on his couch? where first, after quitting Lord Brigden's hotel? Slowly all the particulars of the night of debauchery, all the scenes of brutal infamy, such as, to use the words of one of our best writers, ought to be written in a learned language and be read only by philosophers, all the atrocious deeds he had witnessed, and unspeakably licentious words he had

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heard, occurred to him. Truly, Lord Brigden had fulfilled his promise of giving him such a night in Paris as he had never had before.

"I hate the fellow," said Everitt, as he tried to pay attention to his late breakfast. "There was a cold sneer on his lip all the time—a sneer of triumph at my disgust. He is not a mere visitor of curiosity at such infernal dens, but an *habitué*; every one knew him, and his glib tongue was paying compliments to every one."

Mr. Brookbank was so dissatisfied with himself, and so revolted at his reminiscences, that it was a relief to him to declare his dislike of his host of the previous evening.

"Well," said he, as he strolled out into the sun when he had finished his breakfast, "I wont throw myself again in his way, for I distaste him, nauseate him, abominate him. The day after to-morrow, just before I depart, I will leave my card at his hotel;—and that shall close our intercourse."

“ Ha ! ha ! Brookbank—you out thus early ?”
exclaimed a voice.

Turning round, Everitt saw Lord Brigden standing in the door-way of a jeweller’s shop.

“ Step in, and wait half a second till I have finished my business ;” and seeing Everitt comply, he turned to the lady who was waiting on him at the counter, and handing her some notes, said—“ Here are three bills for a hundred pounds each, and if you give me three hundred francs, we shall be right.”

Madame took the notes into a parlour behind the shop for her husband to examine them, and, the scrutiny being satisfactory, soon returned with the change and a formal receipt.

“ And now, Madame Andoline, that the jewels are mine, you can have no reasonable objection to giving me all the information you can as to how you came possessed of them.”

“ If you would call again, my lord—sometime during the course of to-morrow, or the next day,

—I will see what intelligence I am in a position to give you.”

Raising his hat and bowing politely, his lordship put his arm in Everitt's and quitted the shop.

“Now, Brookbank, have you no apology to offer me,” commenced Lord Brigden, “for leading me step by step into the extravagances of last night? I am your victim; you have my character in your hands to do what you like with; you can, on your return to London, assert to all the good people of your acquaintance, who are doubtless not a few, that all the charges of immorality and general depravity that have been made against me fall short of the fact. But to leave banter, tell me truly, are you more grateful to me for enlightening your ignorance, than disgusted with my apparent profligacy?”

“You certainly are entitled to my acknowledgments for having performed your undertaking to astonish me.”

“You are avoiding my question.”

“Instead of answering it, I will enquire of you, what you think of the moral infirmity of a man who permitted himself, out of morbid curiosity, to be taken from one atrocious sight to another, though at the time he shuddered at what he beheld?”

“What a strange fellow you are ! Are there many young men like you ? or are you in your circle of intimates thought an original ? Don’t think my enquiry impertinent. You are studying me, so it is only fair that I should contemplate you.”

Before Everitt could reply, an equipage pulling up before them, as they were crossing the Rue de Rivoli, in the direction of the Champs Elysées, caused them both to look up and see an elegant open carriage, double seated and drawn by a magnificent pair of English bay horses, containing two ladies—the one grave, even melancholy in appearance, and by her dress and hair, evidencing that she thought herself old—the other young, graceful, and with all the

external attractions of high breeding, though not of a beauty that defied criticism.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said Lord Brigden, bowing, and showing by his manner he was addressing very intimate friends; "and is our intercourse here destined to be confined to five minutes' chat?"

"Frances and I start this very afternoon for the south, to visit my brother Lacy," replied the elder lady.

"We are now going to leave our cards on some old friends in the Faubourg St. Germain. If you have no especial engagement, accompany us: it will be but for half-an-hour; but a little time is precious to friendship," said Frances, in a voice that the impetuous Everitt afterwards declared to be most musical.

"Allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Everitt Brookbank, to you, Mrs. Leatheby," said his lordship, taking the invitation of Frances as an intimation that she approved of the aspect of his companion.

"Do you, Mr. Brookbank, set Lord Brigden an example of obedience, and take your seat opposite me. A drive is always an agreeable recreation when—when one has nothing better to do." As Frances spoke this, her large dark eyes laughed an emphasis to the profundity of the observation she had made, and hospitably she extended her hand, to signify that, were it larger and stronger, and not the tiny thing it was, it should be used to raise her friends into her carriage.

In another minute they were gliding rapidly past the fountains and obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, a soft ripple in the warm air fanning their cheeks.

"Brookbank is enthusiastic in his admiration of Paris," said Lord Brigden.

"So am I," said Frances.

"But your generosity makes you discern good in everything. Had all people your disposition, the world would not be a bad place even for the worst of us."

"I am earnest," returned Frances.

"You are not a republican?" put in Everitt, playfully.

"I have not any very definite notion what the word means. But I admire Paris because she has taught the world a truth."

"And what is it?" enquired Lord Brigden.

"That the prize is for the best."

"Ah, ha! *Detur digniori!* the old story! And your proof of any man being the best, is his being able to clutch hold of the prize?"

"If they would only be Protestants!" sighed Mrs. Leatheby.

"Come, come, mamma, do not forget that we have agreed to think well of the Romanists."

"What do you know of them? Have they been endeavouring to make you a proselyte?"

"No, there is no danger of my lapsing into their errors. But mamma and I have lately formed the acquaintance of some Sisters of Charity, who have made us ashamed of some of our old prejudices, and have compelled us to love

them. We were present at the grand service in the Madeleine last night. Were you?"

"No," answered Lord Brigden. "I had thought of going, but Brookbank persuaded me to accompany him elsewhere."

The drive, though it lasted for more than three quarters of an hour, seemed to Everitt of scarcely ten minutes' duration, so blissfully occupied was he with watching the naive gracefulness of Frances, and listening to such a voice as Mackay says performs the part of "beauty to the blind."

"What a charming creature!" sighed Everitt, as he turned away from the hotel in which Mrs. Leatheby had been staying.

"Too pale; and so cursedly affected," said Lord Brigden, with the amiable intention of irritating Everitt.

"I'll begin to find fault, when I have ceased to admire."

"Remember, that one step will take you from admiration to love."

"And why shouldn't I take it?" cried Everitt, enraged at the mockery of his companion, unable to be dignified, and too excited to hold his tongue.

"I see no reason why you should not take it. She has four thousand a year."

"And isn't engaged?"

"I believe not. Perhaps she is waiting for a hero. You recollect what she said, 'The prize to the best?' I call that an enticing invitation to the young."

"And you replied, 'The prize to him who can clutch it.' Why don't you make a clutch at the prize, my lord?"—Everitt intended to be very bitter.

"Don't taunt me," replied the peer, with a grin. "You know that one so pure, so angelic, as Frances Leatheby, can only regard me with pity."

CHAPTER V.

EMILY ALLERTON.

ON his return from the Continent, Mr. Everitt Brookbank first touched his native land at Southampton, from which famous town he traversed, by means of a coach and four horses, Dorsetshire, and a corner of Somersetshire, and then, after a short extension of travel, arrived at his father's cottage, which was situated on the outskirts of one of the most picturesque villages in the west of England, not far distant from the good borough of Honiton—celebrated alike for its lace, and freedom from political corruption.

The fortnight he passed with his father, a fine

old naval officer, whose boast was that he belonged "to the old school," though the fact was quite the reverse, honestly gave Everitt more pleasure than he had derived from his foreign trip. For Captain Brookbank was a man to be liked by every one, and to be little short of worshipped by a son. But more shall be said of Everitt's father in future pages.

In October, Everitt was in town. If he had been asked why, he would have responded without hesitation that he was "up for term," implying thereby that the legal business of the capital would be, or ought to be, at a stand-still without him ; though, if veracity in all its sternness must be adhered to, there was no more chance of Everitt's administering justice as Lord Chancellor, than there was of his doing so as Jack Ketch. On taking his degree, which ceremony he went through at Cambridge before he had completed his twenty-first year, he enrolled himself amongst the members of the Inner Temple, and commenced work with meritorious

application in a special pleader's chambers. Nor did he suddenly cease from his exertions, and throw himself on theatres, late suppers, and green-room flirtations, as is customary with those gentlemen of his class who rise to the dignity of being treated of in works of fiction, but he persevered in perusing, copying, and drawing deeds and abstracts, and in studying critically the volumes of our greatest legal writers, till he had proved the soundness of the judgment of those who said that he *might* if he liked become a profound lawyer.

In every profession, especially in the various avocations of art and literature, there are numerous candidates for employment, who practically manifest high capability, but, either from the absence of the goad of poverty or from want of the stimulus of ambition, fail to put forth all that energy, and determination, and strength which are necessary to winning in a contest.

Everitt, however, is not without a reward for his insufficient toil ; for, at this present day, when

he is a hard-working man (as true Englishmen all are), he can review his Temple course as complacently as Wordsworth did his unhonoured, though not dishonoured, University career. Not only did he acquire that knowledge of his country's institutions, which the worthy Sir William Blackstone, Knight, deemed so desirable in English gentlemen, but he gained a valuable habit of mind, known by the rather unpopular epithet "practical," that causes him to do, to think, to act, and to speak accurately, deliberately, and concisely. And here it may be observed, it is not much to claim for the often vituperated study and practice of the law, to say that they give us in unbroken series brilliant and effective workers in literature—men whose imaginative powers and poetic impulses have been toned down, not subdued, by sound worldly wisdom and experience.

By the time of his call, it became evident to Mr. Everitt Brookbank that he should never arrive at distinction in his profession, and that in all probability he should not often trouble the

courts with his presence. Whatever uncertainty on the subject lingered in his mind was removed by the death of his uncle's only child, which made a great difference in his prospects, since it ensured him the possession, at no distant date, of a rank that society, under ordinary circumstances, respects, and of a property which, though small when balanced against the fortunes of millionaires, was at least equal to what he supposed he should inherit on his father's demise. At least, his pecuniary position left him independent, to work or not—as he pleased.

“Gone down to Westminster, Sir?” enquired a thin and rather mildewed young gentleman, who discharged the onerous duties of clerk and clothes-brusher to Everitt. The question was put to his master who was about to quit his chambers overlooking the Temple gardens for a morning walk, very shortly after he had come “up for term.”

“No, I am not. And you may relinquish that form. If any one calls, say simply that I am not at home.”

"Yes, Sir."

"It is always wrong to tell lies."

"Yes, Sir."

"Are you in want of work?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well! I don't think I have anything for you this morning. You've copied out Mr. Maunder's tragedy?"

"Yes, Sir. Mr. Maunder had it last night, and he gave me a very handsome present."

"Mr. Arthur Strinckall will bring you the rough copy of his novel to transcribe. When that comes, you'll have something useful to do;—and till then—you may read that volume of Wordsworth you will see on my table, or the article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on Gunpowder. Never be idle."

"Yes, Sir."

Immediately Everitt had closed the door behind him, after giving this injunction, the mildewed youth returned to his normal stool, and gave expression to his devotion to the fine arts,

by a twofold annotated picture that occupied half one side of a sheet of foolscap. "Never tell lies!!! Well!!! It'll be a long time before this ere gent," was engrossed at the top of the paper; under this fragment was the picture of a gentleman dressed in the extreme of fashion, supposed by the artist to be a portrait of Mr. Everitt Brookbank (tenuity, height, and volume of whisker being caricatured); then followed, in the same characters as in the inscription above, "will come to be that there gent!!!" beneath which was the likeness of one of Her Majesty's judges in his chair and robes of office, nodding his head over a paper entitled "The cause of Truth."—How many a flower and a village Hampden are left where they ought to be!

Unconscious of his clerk's satire, and not of a nature to be irrecoverably overcome by it, even if it had been imparted to him by some friend, "feeling that he really ought to know it," Everitt walked through a non-rainy, and almost non-foggy, atmosphere, up to the Regent's Park.

Before he turned out of Baker Street, to which the finger of scorn has been so often directed, he surveyed his person in a high looking-glass that ornamented the front of a cabinet-maker's warehouse, thereby incurring the unheard ridicule of two miserable spectators who, being themselves in want of bodily attractions and social advantages, had an elevated contempt for foppery ; and then, after ascertaining that his tie was in order, and his face free from the *muscæ Londinenses*, he proceeded two or three hundred yards further, and paused at a house in one of the most cheerful terraces in the Park.

“Miss Allerton at home?” he inquired of the maid-servant who opened the door ; but, before she could reply, a cry of delight was heard from within from a little boy, just five years of age, who rushed forward and jumped into Everitt's arms with a force that apparently implied a wish to go clean through the top buttonhole of his waistcoat, as Harlequin is wont to do through his next-door neighbour's letter-box. It may be

stated also, that this child's cry of delight bore the same relation to the ordinary human voice, that a gush of song from a nightingale does to the jabber of an enraged parrot.

"Oh, it's Mr. Everitt Brookbank!—you dear man,—how glad I am to see you!—I have such a lot to tell you about—Mr. Hervey has given me—no I won't tell you all—only just this—Mr. Hervey has given me a bridle and saddle, and Uncle Hugh gave me a whip, and I've had three rides;—but I sha'n't tell you all Mr. Hervey has given me—you shall guess that."

"Here you go then, over the water," said Everitt, swinging the child in his arms, as if he would pitch him over the artificial lake. "Tell me what it is."

"I'll tell you,—'tis such a dear little pony, hardly a bit bigger than I am."

"Now, you blue-eyed, curly-pated youngster, lead me upstairs to the drawing-room."

The youngster, upon this request, slipped down

to the ground, and taking Everitt by the hand with a grave air of protection, conducted him into an apartment on the first floor of the house.

"Sit down, my dear, and make yourself comfortable," said this youngster, suddenly rendered sedate and solemn by his cares of host ; and, as he invited his guest to be seated, he put himself down on a lounge, and crossed his knees with the coolness of years. "Sit down, my dear. I am afraid you'll have to wait a bit, for Emily is engaged now with grandpapa, and won't be able to come to you for some minutes. What would you like to do?—Will you read a book?—Or talk to me?"

The precocity of the infant did not tickle Everitt the less because he was accustomed to it.

"Thank you—I think I should prefer a little chat with you—how's your aunt?"

"Well, she's fairly, poor thing," answered the child with a mournful shake of his head.

"That is, you know, she's as well as can be,

under the circumstances, but she is very much worried."

"I am sure you never give her any trouble."

"Oh, dear me, no—I am the greatest comfort she has; she wouldn't know what to do without me.—But you see her spirits can't always bear up. She has a great many trials. And, I think, poor grandpapa is more and more vexing to her.—You know, it isn't grandpapa that says unkind things, but the power within him, that won't let him be what he is. Aunt Emily often tells me so."

As he concluded, his eyes became pensive, and his voice sank to a fearful whisper, as if he felt that he was touching on a very solemn subject.

"But how do you know that she is worn and dejected? Does she talk to you about her troubles?"

"No, dear, that's just what she won't do. If she would, I would try to make her laugh and be cheerful; but she always hides all her

grief from me, and pretends to be quite happy—but I have found out she isn't. You see I'll tell you something, only it must be a secret," continued the child in his distinct, musical under-tones. "Sometimes I am awake before she is, and then, till just lately, I used to get out of my crib and go and call her. Well, once I caught her asleep, and I saw the dear girl had been crying, and when I told her, she did not exactly say no, only she laughed it off, and said my head was filled with such queer fancies; and now she won't let me ever see her till she has been called, and nurse always keeps me tight in the nursery till it is breakfast-time."

These confidences were on the point of being pursued further, when the door opened, and there entered Emily Allerton;—too decided and thoughtful in her air to be called a girl—too young and girlish to be called a woman—elegant, and slight in figure, of a clear delicate complexion, and with sunny light brown hair falling in long ringlets down the sides of a face endowed

with that peculiar beauty which is given only to the good.

“I am very glad to see you again ; it is such a long time since we have had you with us,” was her greeting.

“Not so *very* long ; for I spent the morning here the day before I went abroad.”

“And that was three months since.—I keep an accurate calendar. And are you aware what this day is celebrated for?”

“I passed sentence on it as a very ordinary day, as I came from the Temple.”

“’Tis Hugh’s birth-day.”

“And yours also, then.”

Emily nodded.

“She’s twenty-four to-day,” put in Master Arthur ; “she’s getting quite old ; but she doesn’t look old—does she, Mr. Brookbank ?”

“I can never bear anniversaries in mind. I suppose when I come to be engaged, it will be considered a breach of lover’s propriety not to be aware when the lady’s birth-day comes.”

"It will be no very cruel tax on your memory and attention, when that time arrives. This day is celebrated for one event more."

"Ah, I can tell you what that is. 'Tis this day eight years that Hugh brought me down to your cottage at Fulham, since which time we have been on the most intimate terms, and positively, during the entire time, have not had one single quarrel. A sure sign we don't care much for each other."

"A three months' separation, every now and then, prevents such a catastrophe," Emily rejoined, smiling archly; and then she added, "You see how well Hugh's comedy is spoken of. Have you congratulated him?"

"He spent last night with me, when we talked that and many other things over. He is not satisfied with it—nor—nor——"

Everitt hesitated, and glanced at little Arthur who trotted out of the room, saying, "There, you shall have your chat, my dears. Only mind,

Emily love, that you don't keep grandpapa waiting for lunch."

"Nor is he satisfied with himself," Everitt concluded his sentence with saying.

"No, he is not. Poor fellow! he is very much to be pitied, and in some respects to be admired," Emily answered, sadly. "His indiscretions and his follies are cruel punishments to him, for the discomfort they cause him in his worldly circumstances, is not less than the remorse he suffers when reflecting upon them."

"He has made resolves to be more prudent, and to work more diligently."

"Work more!—he toils like a slave as it is! If he would only be less industrious, and go less into society! He acknowledges his weakness in giving up his time and talents to amusing others, instead of doing them substantial good."

"I cannot marvel at his conduct. He is so petted and caressed, that it gives one distinction to be addressed familiarly by him in public."

At this juncture, a man-servant, in plain

black, entered, to announce that luncheon was ready in his master's room.

"You will join us?" enquired Emily, entreatingly.

"Of course; it is one thing I had in view when I left home this morning."

"Thank you; I knew such was the case. Come now. You will find him slightly changed—more weak in body, less clear in intelligence, and more nervous. During the last three months, he has seen scarcely any visitors; and when he has been for a few days without the excitement of callers, he is much worse."

As she gave this intelligence, she conducted Everitt to her father's apartment.

On entering it, the guest saw, not for the first time, an elegantly and richly-appointed room, ornamented with a profusion of works of art, Sevres portraits, buhl, prints, paintings,—all worthy of attention, and some very costly. Seated on a lounge, with a spring pillow behind him, was an aged and suffering man.

A nervous twitch distorted his thin features every few seconds, and the lines running from his mouth showed that bodily disquiet had for long been his daily companion. But his costume was quite the reverse of that in which an invalid usually indulges ; for it consisted of a well-made frock-coat, of a snuff colour, with a collar of a hue somewhat darker, buttoned at the waist, but allowing a portion of a cashmere waistcoat to appear, a faultless white cravat, and tight boots polished to the extreme point of resplendency. So arrayed, with his chin neatly shorn, his whiskers trimmed, his eyebrows pointed, and with a youthful flock of hair curling on his head, sat Mr. Allerton.

As Everitt approached, Mr. Allerton rose and made a dignified and graceful bow, and sinking back on his seat, gave hospitable welcome. "Glad to see you, Alvanley, very glad to see you. This confounded ague keeps me at home. Chicken broth, a glass of madeira, and a game of *ecarté* with my ward, Miss Emily, are my

only resources from ennui. Anything going on at Whites's or Brookes's?"

"Just nothing," answered Everitt, shrugging his shoulders. "M'Mahon was enquiring after you; and, by the by, he won a thousand from Hertford last night at whist. But 'twas dull; every one out of spirits, and wanting you."

"Ah, ha! the rogues can't get on without me. Why don't they content themselves with the other George? Eh? why not?"

"There's a difference, Brummel, between *George the First*, and a man who will never be more than *George the Fourth*."

"Very good, very good!" exclaimed the beau, chuckling with glee at the compliment. "'Tis almost as good as what her Grace of Devonshire said yesterday, when she brought me those flowers. 'My dear George,' she assured me, 'he'll never be monarch while you are alive.'—You'll lunch with us?"

The invitation was accepted, and the party forthwith took their seats at the table that was

spread at the back of the large room. The transit from his lounge to his easy chair at the board was attended with difficulty to Mr. Allerton ; for though he could rise from a sitting posture and make a bow, he could not walk a single step without assistance. Placing her right arm round his waist, and giving his arms the firm support of her left hand, Emily helped her father across the apartment, smiling gently up into his face as she did so. Turning down on her a frown of displeasure, even of hate, the old man submitted to the charity with a bad grace ; and, as he sank down between two cushions before his plate, muttered, “ Cursed officious, upon my word ! extremely insolent ! making me a cripple before my time ;” and turning to Everitt, who had taken a place on his right, he continued in explanation, “ You see, I can’t resent these liberties ; she is my ward—a poor orphan left to my care. But now that I am about to marry, some step must be taken to teach her her position.”

Everitt bowed, and said "Exactly so."

"This marriage can't be driven off any longer. Wash-tub's daughter must patch up the rent—and no little one it is. Fifteen thousand at Ascot, and thirty more during the season at play, cannot be called a trifle. So little Kate Kimber and her hundred thousand will, after all, win me. Lucky woman!"

Everitt turned his eyes from Emily, but he could feel her shudder at this mention of her mother's name.

"So when this ague is off, Cupid will be on. By the by," Mr. Allerton went on after a pause, "I want to ask you——"

He stopped with a bewildered stare.

"The books!" whispered Emily to Everitt who was not slow to take the hint.

"Now it strikes me, George," he said—"have you seen some absurd books that every one is laughing about, actually advancing, not only that old George the Third is gone, but also, that Big Ben——"

"Falsehoods ! Lies ! lies !" cried the old man, furiously,

"Absurd fabrications ! ridiculous nonsense !"

"Are they, indeed ?" the beau exclaimed several times, earnestly ; and then with tears, of gratitude in his eyes for the precious intelligence, he proceeded to put other questions. "Then he isn't dead ? and he didn't say ' this is death ' ? and his body did not perish by slow, slow degrees, racking him with the pains of hell ?"

"No sane person believes it."

"And I'm not dead ? I did not sink, step by step, into all the coarseness of vulgar penury, and all the ignominy of meanness ? I did not subsist for years by soliciting alms from my former friends ? I wasn't thrown into prison at Caen with the scum and filth of human degradation ? And then, my mind wasting away, and my poor paralytic body growing more and more feeble, I didn't become the laughing-stock of children, and the pity of compassionate servants ? I didn't lie on straw in a filthy garret, domi-

neered over by *a woman—a woman?*—(Here he glanced tremblingly at Emily.)—“She who once loved me, though her rank was high and her wealth and beauty great, didn’t cross the water to gaze at and weep over me, as I tottered on, a broken, childish old man, unconscious whose eyes were upon me? My friend, the only man I ever cared for, didn’t come over from England to assist me when I was a moping idiot, and didn’t know him? And I didn’t perish in the *Bon Sauveur*, with none to tend me but the charitable sisters?”

After a few seconds he became calm, and with the tears still falling from his eyes, commenced devouring with a greedy appetite the dish that was placed before him.

When the luncheon was removed, Mr. Allerton’s servant placed before his master a tray of snuff-boxes, interspersed with a few pieces of jewellery, which cabinet of art the old man invited his guest to examine with him.

"This is exquisite, isn't it? Bedford gave it me a month ago in a very graceful way—yes, I must say it was neatly done—though anything like elegance from Bedford!—well, well! I was on the point of leaving Almack's, with Coventry, when I found my snuff-box gone. 'Bedford, my dear scoundrel, have you stolen my box?' I said to the duke, who came up to us. 'How can you suspect me?' was the answer.—'Because you're my friend.'—'Then allow me, George, to act the part of one at a pinch,' he rejoined, slipping this charming morceau into my hand. The next morning I sent him my portrait in miniature set in brilliants."

These fashionable confidences were continued till the day was closing into dusk; and then, when Everitt took his leave, on the plea that he had to call on Lady Jersey, he was permitted to depart only on the understanding that he would come the next morning for half an hour before going down to Watier's.

"Thank you, very much. How I tax your kindness in asking you to lighten my toil!" Emily said to Everitt when he presented himself in her drawing-room to say good-bye. "But it is not to spare myself, you know, that I like you to come. The monotony of life without visitors, now that he cannot leave his own rooms, is very wearying to him, and makes him very uneasy; but now, thanks to you, he will be happy for the rest of the day."

"I wish you could get more change and recreation. This continued labour is too much for you."

"Don't pity me—I am quite well," she replied, with a smile.

"I cannot help pitying you. If you would only complain of your fate and be discontented, I should not grieve so in thinking about it. I am compelled to compare my easy, careless existence with your unceasing anxiety."

"Your life won't always be an easy one, I trust."

"You don't wish it sad?"

"No—but useful to others; and that it cannot be, if it is an idle one."

"Ay; but then, if I exert myself, I shall find my reward in the praise of men. But you—no one knows your self-denial and heroism."

"So it ought to be. I have heard a good man say, that to learn the character of a man, you must ask the question, 'What has he done in the world?' but if you would know a woman's merit, you must inquire, 'What, and how, has she suffered at home?' It is no stern lot; the world pays *you*, but God rewards *us*."

"And does so with the stinginess of a great capitalist."

"Hush! hush! To flatter your wit, you have stabbed your conscience."

She continued after a pause, "And if you will not allow us women to be contented without having the assurance that we are of importance beyond the doors of our own houses, be comforted with knowing that we have that con-

solation also. Wherever the voices of great and good men are heard, they attribute much of what is excellent in society—reverence for things holy, forbearance from selfish enjoyment, singleness of purpose—to the influence of good women exercised on those within the range of their domestic affections.”

“God bless you, Emily! whenever I come to be a great man, I shall say in like manner,” Everitt replied earnestly, and then took his departure.

As he directed his steps towards Pall Mall, with the intention of dining in his club, many solemn and gentle thoughts—solemn, for they were in part of himself, and that want of purpose of which he deemed his life the victim, and gentle, for they reverted to Emily, her bitter task, her uncomplaining fortitude, and calm reliance on other than human aid—made him tread slowly, and with a softened spirit, through the crowds that hurried past him. And yet, such is the caprice and such the wilfulness of

those powers we call the affections, if the vision of Frances Leatheby whom he had seen but once, and of whom he positively knew nothing, had risen before him at that very moment, his heart would have bounded with joy; and if he had been told to make his choice between happiness with Emily, and misery with Frances, the large dark eyes and coquetting face that he had gazed on for less than one short hour in Paris would have won in the decision.

As for Emily—when Everitt left her to visit his club and to go to a theatre in the evening, her day's labour had not reached its termination. To attend on the father who did not know her as his child, but with the tyranny of a disordered mind exacted the most harassing service from her, to gossip with him, to make him his tea, and after it, for three long hours, to play backgammon with him, taking, however, good care not to win a game from him—these were amongst the most trifling of the duties she had to discharge, ere her patient retired under the care of

his man to rest, and she was at liberty to enjoy the composure of solitude, and to anticipate another day of effort and endurance, and one, too, not as this had been, broken by a cheerful interview with a friend.

“Emily, dear,” said little Arthur, soon after greeting her the next morning, “I wish Mr. Brookbank would come again to-day, for he does you good. I was thinking about him last night.”

“Well, Arthur, and what about him?”

“I should like him and you to marry; for he seems very fond of you, and I’m sure you love him.”

As he finished his observations, the acute young gentleman raised his eyes to aunt Emily, to extract from her countenance that assent to his opinions which he felt they deserved.

“Why, dear Emily, I haven’t hurt you, have I? What is the matter?” he exclaimed in another second, and running to his aunt, threw his arms round her neck.

"You did not mean to pain me, darling," she answered softly. And recovering herself quickly, she added, "If you make me a promise, Arthur, I know I may trust you to keep it. Will you make one?"

"Of course."

"Never say any such thing as you have just said, to Mr. Brookbank ; and never say any such thing again to me, or any one else. Will you promise to obey me?"

"Certainly, dear," said Arthur, looking surprised.

CHAPTER VI.

*

COUSIN HUGH.

“MY dear, that boy does you credit,” said the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough to his wife, uttering the words boldly and unhesitatingly. His manner asserted more plainly than speech, “I have only spoken seven words, my dear—no more;—but they contain a great deal!”

Mrs. Dillingborough blushed at the commendation, as she asked—“But why does he do *me* credit?”

“He is your son, and you may be proud of him with reason. To be able to say ‘I am a mother’ is a rational ground of exultation for

any devout or patriotic woman. The early fathers held very erroneous notions of the dignity and beauty of wedded love ; they looked on marriage at the best as an inferior estate to celibacy ; and some regarded mothers as necessary machines—and babies as necessary absurdities. The view that detestable and impious charlatan, Napoleon, took of the noblest career a woman could accomplish was not far from truth. ‘Increase and multiply’ was the divine command at the creation,—and brutes, under the unerring guidance of instinct, obey ; but man, with his vain philosophies, in one age inculcated by Origen, in another by Malthus, questions the propriety of the injunction. You, Isabel, have not been contumacious, and as a reward, you are the mother of as fine a lad as the Dillingboroughs have ever had. His father in the sixteenth degree was a baron, and perhaps in time he—”

“—Will be a good man,” Isabel put in with a smile.

This conversation took place one evening at

seven o'clock, or slightly past, in the library of Mr. Dillingborough's Rectory house in London, before a roasting fire, and over, or to be accurate, along one side of, a table garnished with fruit and wine. Soon after her marriage, Isabel discovered that her husband had a lively regard for certain of the comforts and habits of his widowed existence, amongst which ranked high in the list, moderate indulgence in port wine and walnuts, while sitting after dinner in the easy chairs of his various libraries. The young wife therefore insisted and wheedled her reluctant master into resuming that, and sundry other innocuous pleasures, and allowing her to sit with him during his periods of post-prandial epicureanism. To do Mr. Dillingborough justice, he offered an honourable amount of opposition to these proposals; but there was no resisting Isabel's importunities—so orders were given that, "when they were alone," dessert was to be placed for them, during the winter months, in the library.

Mr. Dillingborough paused after his brief burst of discourse, and drank a glass of wine that shone in the beams of the fire like that famous crimson light behind which the varlet “pestles his poisoned poison.”

“Five next birth-day.”

“Five next birth-day,” echoed Isabel.

“He will be a great trouble to you.”

“Not much, I trust.”

“You must anticipate anxiety.”

“I had rather not.”

Mr. Dillingborough shook his head, took a few more sips, and then again broke the silence.

“Five more years! why, Isabel, we are getting quite an old couple!—at least I am!”

“Not a couple—you don’t mean that?” Isabel interposed.

“No, you goose,—how should I grow into a couple?—How can one ever become two?”

“By being multiplied by two, clearly.”

The Rector burst out into hearty laughter at Isabel’s drollery, who, in beholding the con-

sequence of her humour, had the satisfaction of seeing that the only purpose she had in speaking was accomplished.

“You’re getting on very fast. Your intelligence is ripening, and your wit daily becomes more vigorous,” observed the old man, when he next spoke. “You couldn’t have talked so, when you used to visit the greenhouse at Copley and walk back home to Kilverton.—You are coming on ;—or, I am going off.”

Another pause ; some more wine ; and one prune, which Isabel put on his plate.

“Still you’ll have an anxious time with him, and perhaps, no friend will be near, of whom you can ask advice.”

“What do you mean ?” cried Isabel, opening her eyes with alarm.

“Why, my love, you cannot reasonably hope that I shall be alive when he is at college.”

“Pray—pray don’t speak in that way,” implored Isabel. “Why do you suggest such horrible thoughts ?”

“We ought to look forward—and not forget to glance at the dark side,” responded the Rector gravely.

“God will help me!” whispered Isabel.

“I trust so, my dear, I trust so,—but you may not be unreasonable in your expectations.”

“Of course not.”

“You may not construe every occurrence in the most unfavourable manner.”

“It would be wicked and ungrateful in the extreme to do so,” said Isabel folding her hands piously.

“And above all things, you must allowance him liberally, and not be too strict with him.”

“What do you mean?” again cried Isabel.

“I was speaking of the boy, my dear,” answered the Rector, hazily.

“And I was thinking of—” But Isabel did not complete her sentence.

More silence; more wine; and another prune.

“What do you think of the laws of primo-

geniture ?” the Rector asked, after a considerable period of meditation.

“ I am not a lawyer,” Isabel responded, evading the question.

“ No, I never accused you of that,” replied the Rector testily ; “ but you can tell me how you think a father ought to distribute his property amongst his children.”

“ Yes ;—and I should say he ought in such a distribution to do as his conscience directs him.”

“ Don’t tease me—you trifle with me.”

There were signs of no ordinary irritability in the Rector’s face as he spoke ; but they vanished almost instantly, when Isabel crossed over the hearth-rug to him, and putting an arm over his shoulder and a kiss on his lips, said, in soft low tones, but with an earnestness of supplication that would have beseeemed a prayer to heaven—
“ I implore you, my dear husband, not to ask my advice on such a subject. Decide yourself, and do not honour—do not burden me with the necessity of giving you counsel. You know

in what direction my affections lead my judgment, and you know also, that my fear is that your knowledge of those affections and sympathy with them should cause you to act unjustly, in the opinion of the world, to your other children."

"Well, well, it shall be as you wish," was the answer; "but as you won't chat, I must take my nap. Let me see, the carriage will be at the door at half-past ten."

"Here's your night cap," said Isabel, taking a white silk handkerchief from a drawer in the table, and throwing it lightly over his head. "Go to sleep, and I'll sit and watch you, as soon as I have darkened the lamp."

After almost extinguishing the light, she slipped into a seat in a corner, removed from the fire, and sat noiselessly—watching the shadows and dim illuminations, caused by the flickering flames in the grate, play on the shelves of learned books and the antique portraits that covered the walls; listening to the easy and heavy breathing of the sleeper, the falling of cinders,

the sinking together of the ashes ; and wandering amongst a thousand thousand thoughts that sprung from and ever led her back to her husband's speech, "We are getting old—at least I am." As she reviewed those past five years, did she notice changes to be lamented in herself and others ? Most certainly alterations had taken place, of which she was not ignorant. Worldly grandeur, and more especially the magnificence of so small an item in it as the Honourable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, appeared to her very differently to what it did when she was child Isabel at Kilverton. Was it in sorrow that she saw that the great world was like a great mountain, more enchanting in the distance than when near ? was she mortified in learning that the mighty family to which she was united, and which she had regarded with loyal awe, was scarcely of average stature amongst those giants with whom they felt they held equal rank ?

That father, whom she had once venerated as

brave and good ; did it ever come into her mind, that he was a scheming, worldly little man, who, in uniting her to the old Rector, had considered only his own social advancement ? and, if this, in ever so vague a form, occurred to her, was it followed by a cold weight dropping on the heart ? The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was, to her childish inexperience, the impersonation of human talent and devout piety ;—had she come to regard him as a *good-natured old man*, prolix in his speech, procrastinating and timid in action, hazy in his intellects which were ever puzzling about in the tangle of prejudices and perplexities, that enveloped him ; not passionately devoted to things sacred, meaning well to man, but better to himself ; loving her much, but a rise in the funds more ?

Did she see, that he was in truth, no mate for her ? that he was incapable of being one with her, as the composure of evening cannot unite with the freshness of morning ? that her aspirations would be deemed, if she unfolded

them to him, the workings—not wonderful, not blameworthy, not unloveable—but the uneasy workings of a mind unsubdued by time?

The cinders are dropping, the ashes are sinking, the flames have ceased, and the red glow alone lights up the room; and there, in his easy chair, with his head lying back, and covered with the white kerchief, reposes the Rector. Hush! hush! Quietly on tip-toe steals away Isabel, opens the door without noise, closes it without disturbance, crosses the hall, mounts the stairs, and enters her child's nursery which, like the library down stairs, is dim in fire-light. The child is sound asleep—sound asleep as his father—and Isabel seated near the bed watches him too. “You'll have an anxious time with him—you'll have an anxious time with him,” said Mr. Dillingborough.

How long Isabel remained by her child's bed, and how long she devoted to the task of self-adornment, it is beyond the power of the historian of these pages to declare; all he can state

is, that, punctual to the appointed minute, she stood before her husband, ready to proceed to Mrs. Dalmaine's house, which that evening was thrown open to receive that noble society in which Mrs. Dalmaine was born, and those highly interesting authors, artists, musicians, and political vagabonds who were wont to rally round her twice or thrice during the season. Young, or at least not approaching *passée*, beautiful, endowed with an easy-tempered husband possessed of twenty thousand per annum, and gifted with no common talents and amiable qualities, Mrs. Dalmaine had a somewhat paradoxical reputation as a leader of fashion, a wonderfully good-natured woman, and a genius.

As has been before remarked, the dignified circle in which the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough moved, was, for the most part, a decorous, cold, and even stupid circle; consisting of a few high-and-dry bishops, (who had obtained their advancement long before intellectual qualifications were deemed requisite in a prelate, so

long as his father had a vote in the Upper House, and half-a-dozen in the Lower) a few ancient members of the peerage, grey-headed patricians whose school of toryism was almost extinct, and family connections in the shape of dowager aunts and old-maid cousins.

When Isabel first presided at her table in town, and went the round of a series of dinner-parties, as dull and formal as ever were the entertainments of the genteelest country gentility, she was astonished at witnessing how prosy and hum-drum grand people can be. Every now and then, however, in the course of the months annually passed in Westminster, her visiting engagements took her out of this high-and-dry set and gave her a glimpse of a more elegant and amusing, and brilliant life in London ; and nowhere did she get more agreeable change of this kind, than at the parties of Mrs. Dalmaine.

In due time she found herself slowly passing through the drawing-rooms in Park Lane, which

blazed with light pouring down from enormous chandeliers on lustres and mirrors arranged with admirable ingenuity, for causing the rooms to have the effect of being twice the size they really were, and for giving every visitor a flattering likeness of himself in a score of different directions. And sweetly charming was Isabel allowed to be, as she proceeded, leaning on her husband's arm, through the crowds of ladies, as a general rule rich in jewels in proportion as they began to be poor in charms, young girls, already fagged by the season which had scarcely begun, begums and gentle matrons, stolid guardsmen, supercilious club roués, moustached Italians, and bearded Germans.

"Put me down in a seat in this corner," said Isabel, when she had passed through the rooms twice, exchanging words and recognitions with the few acquaintances she found in them, "and while I am amusing myself with staring at all these queer faces, do you go to Dean Nollekens, and hear his version of his proceedings. You

will not find me, on your return, gone off to waltz with any gay cavalier."

The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough did not object to a proposal which offered him the prospect of an hour's prosification with his friend, about a cathedral squabble ; so consigning Isabel to a chair in the corner, he went off in search of the Dean. To that corner many an eye turned to survey and approve Mrs. Dillingborough, whose excitement and pleasure at the scene gave fresh animation to her beauty.

"Dressed in such exquisitely good taste," whispered one lady to a friend, in reference to Isabel's white tulle and rose coloured knots, the white and crimson camelias in her breast, and her dark hair falling in long ringlets in front, and behind braided with a chain of pearls.

"With such kissable lips," commented a second lady, blessed with lips that unquestionably might claim the epithet as their own.

"What intellect and thought in her eye ! and how graceful !" observed a third.

“And the father of that exceeding small glorious maid—how magnificent and venerable was he!” said a heart-stricken exile who professed devotion to England’s daughters, though he had not entirely mastered the difficulties of their language.

But the gazers were quickly attracted in another direction, for, at the request of Mrs. Dalmaine and some ladies who were near him, a gentleman, famous through the town as a wit and author, seated himself at a piano and sang a comic ballad of his own composition, entitled “Our last Parliament.” Each stanza closed with a general laugh from the whole room, that showed the points were not lost upon the auditors. As the song proceeded, the crowd closed round the performer, parties flocked in from the other rooms, and those urgently demanded favourites of fashion with half-a-dozen engagements that very night on their hands, who were about to return down the staircase immediately after having climbed up it, stopped,

and assisted in the riotous applause. So triumphant was the essay, that the satisfaction of the hearers, on the conclusion of the last verse, was expressed with a vehemence little becoming so well-bred an assemblage.

“No, indeed, I cannot sing again,” replied the vocalist, a tall, slight, but athletic young man, with a small, round face, that was pallid and smooth as a child’s, and rendered expressive by laughing black eyes. “You have had my one solitary chanson; I have none other for this season. You think one is a very small stock in trade; it is quite enough, for, of course, in this highly civilized land, no one pays a visit more often than once a year to the same friend:—indeed, I have thought of being economical, and making ‘Our last Parliament’ serve me for two sessions.”

“I wish you would treat us later in the evening, when you have seen who are here—and inspected them, with a display of your talent as an improvisatore,” importuned the lady to whom he spoke.

"My dear Lady Marie, I am no improvisatore ; the wretched fellows who told you so only desired to degrade me in your eyes into a moun-tebank."

Another lady, resembling a hollyhock, in being tall and sometimes stately—in being indefatigable in her attempts to beautify nature, but not succeeding—in being conspicuous but not winning—drew near, and gave her subscription to the adulation. "How much we are obliged to you ! the music and the song alike good !"

"Nay, nay ; I have no command over the keys ; and what remains of my poor voice is not more pleasing than remains usually are."

"But," persisted the amiable woman, "the rhymes are so full of fun."

"That was extracted from Punch," rejoined the vocalist, with a mischievous laugh.

"If so, you placed it there originally."

"Mrs. Stratford, can you, do you, believe that I—I—write in newspapers ? Whoever in-

sinuated such a thing to you?" was the answer made with an indescribably droll affectation of horror at such an imputation.

As with ease and humour he put aside his flatterers, and extricated himself from their persecution, Isabel rose with a face of delight and surprise, and advanced to welcome him as he approached her quarter.

"Will you be so ungracious as to reject my thanks?" she said, as she placed both her hands in his.

"What, Isabel, is it you?" he replied, with astonishment. "I beg your pardon—I mean Mrs. Dillingborough."

"You must do penance for your breach of decorum; and by my side here have a long chat with cousin Isabel about old times. How strange that, so often and so much as I have heard of you in London, we have never met before. Why did you not call on me after my wedding?"

Hugh Falcon — for it was Isabel's cousin

.....

Hugh whom Captain Potter, of Kilverton, had years before denounced as reprobate and unworthy—was not slow to respond cordially to this address, though a London rout is not the best conceivable spot for two old friends to indulge in family reminiscences in.

“Have you seen my uncle Potter lately?”

“Not for nine months,” answered Isabel; “we do not pass much time together: he is fully occupied with his family and his farm.”

“And you also—how is the little boy?—Does he grow more like you than ever?”

“How did you know he resembled me?”

“My veracious eyes were my informants. I have before now waylaid your nurse in St. James’s Park, and had an interview with my little kinsman. He knows me well enough. Did he never tell you of the funny Mr. Ivan Ivanowitz?”

“Are you Mr. Ivan Ivanowitz?” answered Isabel, with a start.

“The same; although little Harrie supposes

me to be engaged in the cold north, capturing a forlorn bear."

"And yet—you have never been near me?"

Hugh turned his flashing dark eyes full on Isabel who underwent a novel thrill of wonder, and perhaps fear, till their earnest, searching scrutiny had concluded. "I kept away from you, because——"

"Good evening," put in a soft voice from a dazzlingly superb belle to Isabel. "Have you exchanged words with the Armenian Prince? You must have him presented to you, for he is such an interesting creature—is he not, Mr. Falcon?"

"A handsome fellow, unquestionably, and with an agreeable fund of conversation," answered Hugh.

"I see dear old Mr. Dillingborough is here. How can you let him keep such late hours? They'll kill him," continued the belle.

"I trust not," answered Isabel, coldly.

“Do you sing again, Mr. Falcon? I wish you would, to oblige me.”

Hugh said he had neither voice nor spirits for another song; and then the fair intruder ordered the cavalier on whose arm she leaned, to conduct her to the fostering wing of her mamma, or—yes, she would give him a choice—to lead her to the waltz.

“Then you number Miss Leatheby amongst your friends?” inquired Hugh of Isabel, when Frances had left them.

“She is my detestation,” answered Isabel emphatically.

Hugh laughed at the heartiness with which the dislike in which he was a participator was declared; and afterwards observed, “But she is very much admired.”

“Her beauty deserves praise.”

“And her wealth also.”

“It will enable her to select a tyrant from a herd of slaves.”

“Ah, Hugh!” exclaimed Everitt Brookbank

putting a hand on his friend's shoulder, "I want to see you. Is she here?"

"Yes; and has honoured me with a word."

"How does she look?"

"Divinely; that's the word, I believe."

"Where shall I find her?"

"Waltzing with Lord Brigden."

"That infernal man! If she did but know him!" said Everitt, biting his lip, and turning pale.

"Don't be alarmed. She'll dance with you, if you ask her."

"Come and see me, old boy. You have not been near me for weeks; I am very wretched, and I want your advice," returned Everitt piteously. And on he went in pursuit of his goddess.

"A distinguished-looking young man!—who is he?" asked Isabel.

"One of the servile gang you mentioned. He would willingly barter his many chances of a long

and prosperous life to be allowed to call Frances Leatheby his own for one short month."

"Save him from such a fate: he deserves a better one—does he not?"

"He is a good fellow, really a noble nature;—no lot would be too fortunate for his deserts."

"Then, could you bear to see him the husband of such a selfish, heartless woman?"

"How do you know she merits all this severity of condemnation?"

"I feel it," answered Isabel, with a shudder. "Her eyes, which people tell me inflame so many hearts, make me shiver."

"Falcon, my dear fellow—just one word," said Leonard Ambleby, a languishing Adonis, with perfumed whiskers.

"What does the world say to you, Leonard?" Hugh asked, goodnaturedly.

"You see, my dear boy," responded Leonard, dropping his voice to a whisper, "those De Vere girls are here, and by Cupid, I'll ask 'em to dance, and make an offer to 'em to-night. I'm

game. Hicksley assures me that forty thousand pounds apiece is the least they have ; and I am resolved to cut in."

"And marry both?"

"Don't joke, Hugh ;—for, really, matrimony is no more a fit subject for laughter than death. What I want you to do, is to settle which of 'em it is to be ! How do you say—Julia ? or Kate?"

"Which are you in love with?"

"Ah ! now that's it. I am in love with both—that is, I am just as devoted to one as I am to the other—so I can't decide."

"Toss up then," said Hugh, gravely. "Heads, Julia ; tails, Kate."

"It would look deuced queer to be spinning a coin up to the ceiling in this place :—that won't do. Help me out of the hobble somehow or other."

"On the table at the side of this room you'll find a pack of cards Alfiori, the conjuror, was using an hour since. Draw two cards—the first

for Julia, the second for Kate—and let the highest win. Lucky girl, Julia will be, if she gets the prize !”

Leonard obeyed, and in half-a-minute returned to whisper in Hugh’s ear, “Julia has got it,” and immediately started off for action.

“That ‘sickly Apollo,’ as you call him,” said Hugh, in answer to an observation from Isabel, “has been imparting to me the secrets of his heart. He has gone off to hear his fate from the lips of a girl to whom he is passionately attached.”

Isabel laughed. “How extraordinary of him to make such confidences to you ! Does not the knowledge that you write books, and ‘print the notes you take,’ make people cautious what they say to you ?”

“Quite the reverse. Wherever there is an eccentric old maid, with an unfortunate penchant for a young man of rank and fortune, an old man who has received ten refusals from the same quarter, a foolish woman who is paying the just

penalty of her follies in the ridicule of her neighbours—in short, wherever there is a person, to whom is attached a story, a mishap, a quarrel, an absurdity that ought to be buried in silence, that person is impelled by an irresistible power to unfold to me or some other author all the windings of the circumstances.”

Before Isabel could reply, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough approached.

“ Oh, here is Mr. Dillingborough. This, dear, is the cousin Hugh Falcon, you have heard me so often speak of, and also Harrie’s especial friend Ivan Ivanowitz, as it appears (which it certainly does not from Harrie’s pronunciation) the name is.”

The Rector was delighted to see Hugh. “ Do come down and call on us, Mr. Falcon. No delays. No ceremony. And we’ll not demand an apology from you for keeping away so long. You must consider yourself complimented by my good regards (which, I can assure you, you have), for I don’t like authors—scandalous,

levelling fellows!—but *you* have done good service in the conservative cause. You recollect, perhaps, how I gave the rads a cudgelling in the Conservator. My *candid statement* caused a good deal of sensation ; but that was years before your time.”

“ But the fame of it has come down to me, and I have also read it. Your sublime commiseration for the one soul was gall to the rascals.”

The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was delighted. Society always enlivened him with a buoyancy and geniality of temper, that quickly expressed themselves in his discourse and manner. The difference between the Rector from breakfast till the evening, and the Rector at a dinner or ball, was so great, that his friends commiserated him in the morning as a worn-out, somnolent old gentleman, and when they saw him by candlelight pronounced him a marvelously good companion, for his years.

“ Can’t you manage to call on me to-morrow. I shall be at home after four. Do come, for a long talk.”

To this invitation, which came from Isabel, Hugh was giving an answer of acceptance, when the Rector poured upon him further assurances of the pleasure he had in making his acquaintance. "But we may not stay longer, Bel, for 'tis already very late. So let us slip away. Good evening, Mr. Falcon—we shall take the liberty of family connexion, and draw largely on your good nature, in compelling you to visit us frequently."

"On the understanding that such is the tendency of your ill-temper, you may aggravate me as much as you please.—Good-night."

As soon as Isabel vanished, the scene darkened to Hugh, (though the merriment and genuine festivity of the entertainment were perceptibly increasing) and he was debating whether he should not make his exit, when a voice behind him said—

"What has kept you in this room all the evening? Do you wish to leave with an unfavourable impression of my newly acquired splendours?"

"To make an honest confession, I have met this evening, for the first time for eight years, a cousin who was a great favourite of mine when she was a child. It is she who has kept me from paying due attention to your new decorations."

"If you have now fully and completely offered your sacrifices to family affections," returned Mrs. Dalmaine, good-naturedly, "come and pass judgment on the vases, and then I'll let you waltz with my pretty niece whom every one is scrambling for."

An hour later, Hugh was walking down the stairs into the hall, with the intention of getting away, when Leonard Ambleby touched him on the shoulder and whispered something in his ear.

"Kate? I thought it was the other," Hugh answered, rather peevish at the interruption to his thoughts.

"So it was," returned Leonard, excitedly, though in a low voice. "And I did first propose to Julia who refused me instantaneously, appa-

rently thinking it was not in good taste my addressing her on such a subject at such a time. So I pocketed the affront, and without allowing five minutes to intervene, told Kate I was her devoted servant: she has been more kind in her reception. But I must return to her, and not stay here prosing with you."

"Have the ladies no brothers?"

"No. I sha'n't have to shoot any one, under any circumstances."

In another minute Hugh Falcon was in Park Lane, with a frosty wind sweeping down the pavement. Having lighted a cigar at a coffee-stall at the top of Oxford Street, he put up the collar of his overcoat, pulled his hat over his ears, and proceeded towards Gray's Inn, where he had for several years occupied a set of chambers.

So, after such a long period—a lapse of some eight years—he had seen Isabel! Not altered, only matured, he found her; just as simple and truthful as when she was a little girl, but, in

her earnest eyes, more thought and patient consideration. She was startled at his first appearance, but not alarmed, as she would have been, had he called up painful memories ; on the contrary, she seemed pleased to see one who was a key to a thousand pleasant recollections. His saying that he had often nursed her child had caused her only a momentary surprise, and immediately she appeared to regard it as very natural and affectionate, but nothing more :—clearly she had not for an instant construed his conduct as an indication that old hopes, long seemingly dead, had still life enough to prey on his vitals.

Was it possible that she had never suspected, never been informed of his love for her ? She was very young when he passed that last autumn at Kilverton, little more than sixteen or seventeen : was it possible that she had never discerned the meaning of his attentions to her ? If now ignorant, would she ever be enlightened ? For him to avoid her, to reject her cordial and

cousinly advances, would be to set her hunting for a cause for his apparent coldness and indifference to her affection. To be near her, to receive her kindness, to watch her caressing her child, would be fanning a slow fire that had long consumed him, and might still burst forth and destroy others !

The Rector appeared a kindly old man, and one not likely to be inconsiderate of her enjoyments. She did not seem depressed or mournful : indeed, she was the picture of happiness ; —but what was there in that ? sorrow, he knew, could wear a mask, be a writer of comedies, a singer of humorous songs, and a sprightly jester in journals and clubs. Still the rector was a kindly old man. How great was his age ? Threescore years and ten ? The cold wind blew over old men's graves,—when would it beat on his ?

It was a murderous thought. Hugh shuddered, and as he looked up from under the dark gables of Holborn at the cold stars, the

cold wind, as it lashed against him with unsteady gusts, made him recollect the graves of the young also over which it careered — chill and bleak.

CHAPTER VII.

MORNING CALLS.

MR. EVERITT BROOKBANK woke late, breakfasted later, and made his toilet later still, on the day succeeding our visit to Mrs. Dalmaine's house in Park Lane. When the light of eleven o'clock of the morning, which is often figuratively termed *dawn*, broke on his eyes, it dispelled a vision of Frances Leatheby, whirling round in his arms — to her delight, his triumph, and the jealousy of Lord Brigden and an entire legion of lesser rivals. It was close on noon when he emerged from the contracted den he dignified by the name of bed-room, and

took possession of an easy chair in his sitting-room, midway between the fire and a table on which figured the materials for breakfasting. A kettle was hissing and bubbling on the fire, and the eggs were all ready to be popped into the saucepan. The room was well furnished, abounding in arrangements for comfort, and it commanded an unexceptionable view of the Temple Gardens and the river, busy with the silent life of crowded steam-boats, and bearing its customary burden of dead dogs and abomination a little way on to the sea. Altogether, Everitt in his embroidered dressing-gown and cheerful room, did not seem badly placed in this world of hardship.

“Ah! a letter from the governor—dear old boy—and *the Times* also. Well, the latter may be detained yet longer, and be contented with a second place. The epistle of Captain George Brookbank, R.N., shall have precedence.”

The seal was soon broken; and Everitt read

what we will transcribe with an accuracy, faithful even to accidental errors in orthography.

“DEAR BOY,—

“Don’t imagine I have not written to you because I have not had you in my mind. Quite the contrary, I assure you. For I have been thinking about you very much since your letter of last week, trying to put myself in your situation, to reggard the world from your point of view, which, of course, differs much from mine now, and not a little from what mine was in days that have vannisht. For times have altered materially—thank God, the change is for the better ; but you are of the present, and I belong to the old school.

“As to your working or not at the law, I have long felt you ought to please yourself, and likewise have seen you would not stick to it enough to acomplish anything. Perhaps I should have found more grattification of my pride in your rising to be a great man. What

father would not? but I never cared enough about it to think of urging you with a strong appeal; and I was aware that just a careless hint that I knew you were not inseparable from your books would do no good, and only make you uneasy. And now that the catastrophe of your poor cousin's death has made you your uncle's heir, you cannot be said to be in a position where care for the feelings of your family ought to spur you on to exertion.

“ Besides my retiring pension, I have only £700 a year; of this you have had £350 annually ever since you commenced going to Cambridge; and the whole unencumbered and without embarrassment will be yours when I am no more. I have never given you a grater allowance, though many of your acquaintances, doubtless, have had twice, thrice, or four times the sum, because I could not have been more generous without depriving myself of luxuries which you would not like your father to be without. And I must allow you have always man-

nifested true affection for me in avoiding pecuniary difficulties, and in managing so well, that you have continually made me, and God bless you for them, expensive presents out of your pocket. So much then for your profession and money matters. You may rest assured, lad, that I speke honestly in declaring that I don't want you to look into a law-book again.

“And now for the other matter. Boy, I have been thinking about it, and you, and her ; both in my walks, and solitary sittings in the evening ; and when I have been lying awake at night, I have been full of you, and more than once my eyes have brimmed with tears, and I have seemed to see your mother bending over you as she used to do when you were a little boy. Don't be faint-hearted. If you ought to prosper, you will.

“As to Miss Leatheby's large fortune, apart from wishing you blessed with wealth and all other good things, I don't think anything about it, nor ought she,—nor does she, if she is worthy

of you. You don't go to her as a fortune-hunter, and no one but a rival will be fool enough to call you so. A few years, and you will be a baronet, with a moderate fortune of twelve hundred a year; certainly money is on her side, but not enough to materially alter your position; and, if things must be measured so exactly, you have the advantage in family. Not that I am at all a stickler for blood, as to high or low being best; I am inclined to think 'tis six on one side, and half-a-dozen on the other. When I was in the service, the few dirty rogues I came in contact with, were in every case of old birth, and the two most chivalric gentlemen I knew in early life were sons of shopkeepers; but still, this proves little. Let me hear how it goes on. My advice is, *don't snigger snagger*. A bold stroke, and a good stroke, is my motto.

"There's nothing stirring here. Martha's son has married, and I gave him the wedding sute. Charley gets on well, and since his teeth have been looked to, eats his corn and looks all

the better for it ; his coat is like velvet. The doctor, Colonel Bandy, the Rector, and I, go on with our rubbers. The night before last, when we were over our toddy at the Doctor's, Bandy asked with a laugh, when you thought of marrying. I fancied they must have heard me talk in my sleep ; but it was all accident, and they knew nothing.—And now I am,

“ Your very affectionate father,

“ GEORGE EVERITT.”

“ P.S. When I proposed to your mother, I had not fifty pounds a year, besides my pay, in the world, and she had close on eighteen thousand. But she accepted me, and from our marriage-day, we never thought about the money, except to enjoy it.—G. E.”

Everitt read the letter through twice, every word of it, before he began to breakfast ; and then, just as he made an entry into his first egg, the door opened, and in walked Hugh Falcon.

“ You're just in time.”

"Breakfasted two hours before this," answered Hugh.

"A letter from the dear old father ;—just read it, and say if you don't think him a trump."

Hugh took the epistle, and deliberately perused it, while his companion was demolishing slices of bread and butter, and draining down cups of tea.

"Bless his heart !" said Hugh emphatically when he had finished it. "I wonder if such a father would have made me a better man. My parent died when I was eight years old. He was a choleric fellow with black whiskers, and used to flog me and poor Jack with a dog-whip, if we dared to enter the house without wiping every speck of dirt off our shoes on the mat."

"Look here, Hugh." Everitt called the attention of his friend to a small folio of drawings, which he opened reverentially, as if he touched what was holy.

"Ha !—portrait of lady !—very elegant upon my word."

"Don't you think it like her?" asked Everitt, disappointed at not hearing raptures of admiration.

"'Tis not like her in the upper part of the face."

"You're right. It misses that devout cheerfulness of expression."

"The likeness certainly misses that," answered Hugh, drily.

"What are you so sententious and reserved for?—Don't you think she'll have me?" enquired Everitt quickly.

"I know nothing, or next to nothing, about her, except what I hear from you whose judgment is just now influenced by affection," answered Hugh with a laugh. After a pause, he added, "Did you exchange words with Lord Brigden last night?"

"I could not help it; he wore an air of cordiality as he always has done to me, rallied me about not coming to his chambers in the Albany, and when the Leathebys left Mrs. Dalmaine's to

go to Lady Bristwicke's, he insisted on taking me with him there ;—her ladyship is his cousin, and intimate with him. He evidently detects my passion, and *at least feigns* a desire it should be gratified—but I cannot trust him.”

“ He's an objectionable fellow—a complete scoundrel ; that is my candid opinion of him. I took wine with him last week in queer company.”

“ How ?—where ?”

“ On a second floor in London Wall.”

“ Impossible !” said Everitt opening his eyes.

“ Lord Ropering you are aware of, at least by name. That respectable peer of the realm commenced life at twenty-one, as a married man, and a devout patron of religious meetings in the country, over which, in speeches and prayer, he presided. On attaining the age of twenty-five, he came, by his father's death, into possession of the title and twenty thousand a year. Within two years from that time he was divorced from his wife at her suit, and within ten years, was irretrievably ruined in

purse. I watched him as he was pitched about from one solicitor to another, and then from one accountant to another; Blackey of Little Rider Street pitched him over to Abrahams of Red Lion Street, who soon flung him away as worthless; Kite of Gray's Inn then picked him up, sucked a little blood and water from him, and let him go, as not worth keeping. At length he has lighted on his legs in London Wall. Bodger, an obscure rogue, has kept him there, for months, in his rooms, supplying him with board, lodging, and ten shillings a week pocket-money, on the chance of repaying himself out of some funds he will never raise on his client's life interest in the Ropering estates. Last week Bodger met me in Holborn, and asked me to favour him with my company to dinner. Out of curiosity, and perhaps a dim prevision that the accountant might be useful to me as in days of old, I went at the appointed hour, and to my astonishment, found Lord Ropering a part of the establishment. We three dined off a tough

beef-steak and bread and cheese ; beer came from a public house hard by ; and there were some bottles of sherry in waiting. After the repast, we smoked and drank the said sherry ; and while we were so engaged, who should walk into the room but Lord Brigden, with a cold sneer on his lips ? Bodger, who had been swelling with pride in showing off his noble guest to me, was clearly not well pleased with the irruption of this second distinguished visitor, who had come uninvited. There was not a fourth wine-glass for him, so Bodger hospitably made use of a tumbler himself, and had his own small glass washed fresh for his Lordship. Harmony soon pervaded the proceedings ; Ropering gave the toast of ‘ the privilege of peers from arrest,’ and in his speech favoured us with the particulars of an altercation he had that afternoon had with a tobacconist, who was one of his creditors ; and we all enjoyed ourselves, with the exception of our host. I left at about nine or half-past, and had not proceeded ten yards on

my way home, when I heard a voice behind me, and turning, saw Bodger. 'Just so,' said the poor little man; 'there's the shark after his prey. Ropering never has five pounds in his pocket, but he goes and loses it to Lord Brigden. The last time he had any great sum was more than a year ago, when Levi and Blow made their last advance of eight hundred pounds on the Brentham farm. Well! what became of that?—He was on his way here to see me, with the honestest intentions I do verily believe, when Lord Brigden met him, and they went—you'll hardly believe it—into a public in Little Britain, and drank sherry cobbler at four o'clock in the afternoon; and by Jove, sir! they set to work pulling straws for a hundred pounds a straw, and Ropering lost every penny he had in his pocket, and gave his I.O.U. for a thousand pounds besides. It is not the money only that Lord Brigden cares about, but the pleasure also of sucking the last breath out of a dying friend!'—Little Bodger grew quite poetical on the subject."

“Can you credit such a story?” asked Everitt.

“I know every word of it to be true. I could tell you more revolting stories of that man.”

“And Frances Leatheby allows him to approach her! If she did but know his character!”

“And yours also,” put in Hugh, with a laugh. “Then it would be all right.”

“Hugh, don’t discourage me. I must die or win.”

“Then I honestly hope you’ll triumph.”

“I dare not hope for success. It is monstrous insolence my competing with men of rank and fortune. If I could but get into the House now, and show I had some capability in me to make her take rank amongst the great ones!”

Hugh burst out laughing. “How worldly you youngsters get, immediately you fall in love with the moon; almost as much so as you are unselfish and disinterested, when all is smooth

and you have everything you wish for ! This time last year you would have scorned the thought of making court to an heiress by displaying to her your prospects of becoming a privy councillor. Where's all your rant gone about art, and philanthropy, and self-devotion to your race ? What has become of your contempt for men seeking their private ends under professions of anxious exertions for the public weal ? Since you are ready to truckle, what's your price ? Would you be purchased by a place of two thousand a-year ?”

Everitt's face betrayed that he writhed internally under this address, and it was with no slight burst of irritation that he replied to it. “ You're grown suddenly very severe on moral infirmity.”

Hugh remained silent for a minute, and then answered, “ Don't judge me wrongly, Everitt. If you are unjust to me now, you wont be so after ten minutes' reflection. You cannot believe I could find pleasure in paining you. I

have a great admiration for you, and have had—ever since you were a lad in jackets. You are younger than I am by six or seven good years ; but that, when you were a child and I was already a man, did not prevent our being fast friends, and from that time to this we have been close together, and never had a misunderstanding. It is not probable I should play lightly with the feelings of such a companion. If I have touched you up now, and often just lately, it has been in the wish to save you from the risk of placing your heart where it may not be valued. I don't say Miss Leatheby *wont* accept you ; but, as you say, she is what is called high above you. A hundred other men are out after her, and it'll be a fierce race, and if you don't win her, you'll lose more than all the rest of the unsuccessful ones." Hugh paused for several seconds before he concluded : " As to my being severe on moral infirmity, you should not have said that, who know so well what my career has been ; how my talents have been frit-

tered away, how laughter is only my way of crying; how, even at my early age, I see I have lost the game of life, and how I have to contend with a thousand difficulties. You shouldn't have said it."

Everitt jumped from his seat, and squeezing his friend's hand, begged him to pursue the subject no further; so it was dropped,—and Hugh responded, "You're a princely fellow, Everitt. You have as good a brain as I had at your age, and in addition to it, firmness and strength of purpose, and a heart like the sun. If you don't run on a rock, you'll be before you die not only a great man, but a truly happy one. And could I but see you that for ever so short time, I should not care if I ended my days in a lunatic asylum."

The news in *The Times*, and some occurrences that had lately taken place amongst some mutual friends, formed the materials of conversation for another hour, after the expiration of which time Hugh rose to depart.

"Can't you stop longer?"

"No ; I must go home to dress, and then sally forth to make some calls. I am going to pay my respects to Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough."

"Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough !"

"The same," Hugh answered calmly ; "I met her last night at Mrs. Dalmaine's. Did you not see me talking to the *second* prettiest woman there ?"

"And you call at her house this afternoon ?"

"By appointment.—Are you alarmed ?"

Everitt was grave for half a minute, and then answered "No ; for you can always think for others, though not for yourself."

Why did Hugh that afternoon, after leaving Everitt, and before walking to Westminster, spend six times his usual amount of care on his personal decoration ? Why did he touch up his locks so critically, dashing them with drops of scent ? and why, with patient endurance of pain, did he extract with tweezers half-a-dozen obdurate bristles from the dimple in his chin ? Why did he try on three coats and half-a-dozen

waistcoats before he was habited to his satisfaction? And, when taking a general review of his appearance in the largest mirror his rooms contained, the which we may parenthetically observe was dingy and cracked across the middle, why did he smile and say, 'You're not such a bad-looking fellow, after all, Mr. Hugh Falcon'? Did he desire to capture Isabel's heart? He would have knocked the man down who had dared to suggest such a charge. Was he ambitious of making a favourable impression on Mrs. Dillingborough? Honestly, he had not thought of doing so.

"You are very little altered," said Isabel, when they had exchanged the first greetings.

She was sitting on a chair drawn close up to the fire, and her feet were buried in a down rug. Very much at ease, and very happy, too, seemed Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough in her comfortable rooms.

"You are very little altered."

"Not much in person."

"Nor in mind, if I may judge from last night, when you seemed as gay as ever."

"I have capital spirits, thank God. But don't talk about me—tell me about yourself."

"Where shall I begin?" asked Isabel, with a laugh.

"At the end. We'll go by degrees to the beginning. The last time I saw you before last night, was eight years ago, at Kilverton. You were then the loveliest child of Nature man ever put eyes on^d; so untaught and so wise, so powerful and so submissive. Do you recollect how I used to get you up in your French lessons for your mamima in the morning? and when you had said them, and got *all good marks*, how we used to go out to the Lymm, and sitting on the banks, make a pretence, late into the summer evenings, of fishing? I am inclined to think that I used to throw in the hook without baiting it, so that we might not be so cruel to the poor fish as to catch them. Then when you took it into your head that you would learn

to ride, do you remember my getting a lady's saddle in Witherstone, and giving you equestrian lessons, you being allowed to use the Shetland pony, that ordinarily had no more dignified occupation than that of a market-carrier? And what a battle I had with uncle Potter to get him to allow you to read *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*? And when he at last consented, do you remember how we sate hour after hour under the mulberry tree on the lawn, I reading aloud and you listening? Your papa would not permit us to have any more of the pernicious books, so we went through *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* three times, and cried as much over it the last time as we did the first."

Tears came to Isabel's eyes at these reminiscences.

"But we are all wrong," continued Hugh, with a laugh. "We determined just now that you should commence with the end, and here am I working away at the beginning. Are you as happy now as you were then?"

“That is a hard question for me to answer. I can scarcely recal the outlines of what I was then. Your quick words have accomplished more in resuscitating the past, than my memory could have done by itself with its utmost exertions. I am much wiser, more firm in character, juster in my views of life, than then ; but I am afraid I am not better.” Her voice was very solemn.

“I asked if you are happy.”

“Yes, I am happy, Hugh. I have much to make me so. My husband is a good man, and very fond of me ; his children and family profess warm affection for me, and I have my own darling boy. Many women think me to be envied ; —some—who don’t know me—say—”

Isabel faltered, turned first pale and then red, and then added, “Say, that I gave my hand to an old man for the sake of the worldly advantages—of wealth and position. God knows they judge me wrongly ! In the common sense of love, I loved my father, my mother, and their

children ; I was very fond of you, for you always were so considerate of me, but—”

“This pains you. Why touch on such a subject to me? Don’t again, I implore you.”

“I did not intend, Hugh,” answered Isabel, with tears in her eyes. “But when you recurred to those old days, when I was as perfectly happy as a good child can be, before I had writhed under the insulting calumnies of those who never have the charity to search into the circumstances of my early life, I could not bear that you should harbour a suspicion that I was other than what I seemed.”

“I could not so suspect you, Isabel.”

She soon was calm again, and turning her glance, with her old half-timid, half-playful expression, up to her cousin, observed—“How strange it is you have not married ! I wish you were.”

“How, strange ?”

Isabel laughed. “Why, surely you have a heart to love and be loved ; and you are so admired and so sought after in society, that I cannot

imagine you would find it difficult to win where you wooed."

"You are complimentary."

"Indeed I would be sincere to you."

"Perhaps experience proves your good opinion of me to be undeserved."

"How so?"

"Perhaps I have wooed where I have not won; and having lost once, I can never again wish to win," said Hugh, sadly.

"I did not know that, Hugh. I was careless not to have thought of it. Oh, my dear cousin, may you be only as happy as you deserve!" answered Isabel, with warmth and true womanly delicacy,—not shrinking from the wound her idle words had vexed, but gently giving it the healing touch of sympathy.

At this moment the door opened, and in trotted, in his gayest suit, Master Harrie Dillingborough, to greet his trusty friend, Ivan Ivanowitz. Of course the young gentleman was not many seconds in the room before he made his voice heard,

and also made it clear to his mamma and her visitor that there was small chance, while he was present, of any conversation in which he did not take part. The tyranny, however, of his tongue was soon broken in upon by the appearance of Captain Frederick Dillingborough who, as he bade Isabel good morning, gave Hugh a stare, half of recognition.

“I am delighted to see you, Frederick, so that I can introduce you to my cousin.”

“Ah! Mr. Falcon!” answered Captain Dillingborough. “I thought I knew the face. We had the pleasure of meeting three years since in Bedfordshire, at Brodenham Hall.”

Hugh remembered the circumstance well, and said so; he remembered also that he had then set down Captain Frederick Dillingborough as the most insolently haughty man he had ever come in contact with,—this, however, he did not put in words. The introduction having been renewed by Isabel, her step-son was all urbanity and cordiality to Hugh, was charmed to renew their

acquaintance now that they were united by a family tie, had just read an article in the *St. Stephen's Chronicle*, a very clever one, which he had been informed Mr. Falcon had written, &c. &c. As Hugh happened to have penned the article alluded to, he will not be charged with morbid vanity, when it is admitted that he was pleased with this accidental mention of his performance, since it tended to show that the emanations from his pen were not devoid of gossip-interest to the readers of the journal just mentioned.

When Hugh, after playing a hundred and fifty tricks with little Harrie, took leave, Captain Dillingborough, not at all in accordance with his customary collected stateliness, accompanied him down stairs, and, ere they separated, took steps to efface any unpleasant feelings Hugh might retain for him.

"I have been showing Mr. Falcon the library," said Captain Dillingborough, a quarter of an hour afterwards, on again entering Isabel's drawing-

room. "I thought he might like to see that his Political Tracts, the only two of his volumes a clergyman could be expected to care for, had their place on one of the shelves."

Isabel was gratified by an attention which was at least delicate towards her.

"He's a handsome, and an agreeable fellow," observed Frederick.

"Very much so, and with many other good qualities. Till yesterday I had not seen him for eight years at least, and had forgotten almost everything about him, except that he used to be very kind to me."

"You've been recalling old times, then?" asked the son, eyeing Isabel narrowly, and to himself noting that she evinced signs of having undergone considerable excitement in her interview with her relation.

"Yes," replied Isabel, simply, telling him all he was about to work out of her with the ingenuity of a detective policeman. "And, will you credit it? I have shed a few tears over the past,

—not that I have any cause for regret, as far as I am concerned.”

“Then, is your grief for him?”

“Grief is too grave and weighty a word to use on this occasion. I only shed a few tears, and they were not for him.—I am, though, afraid his life has not been a happy one, poor fellow!”

Isabel had, ever since the grand battle that took place soon after her marriage in the Brandon Close, maintained very confidential and agreeable relations with Frederick Dillingborough. She imparted to him all her interests and cares, with a few points of reserve, as she would have done had he been a favourite brother; and he won her gratitude and affection by never-failing attention. If she wished to go anywhere where his father could not attend her, he was always at her command; when she was in London he kept her well supplied with the best and brightest of flowers; and when she was in the country, he furnished her with weekly packets of London news. So, now, inviting him to sit on a sofa

by her side, she imparted to him many more particulars of her warm cousinly affection for Hugh, than, in all probability, she would have done, had she trembled under the snaky coldness of his eye, as some, who knew him well, did, or had she had a perfect insight into his nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PORCH IN THE ALLEY.

NOT frosty, but keenly cold, no breeze through the close streets, but a raw bleakness in the atmosphere ; no fog sufficient to make wayfarers proceed with caution, but mist enough to obscure the gas-lamps and give pickpockets courage ; a slimy oozing from every cranny and cleft in the pavement, a black tenacious mud in the carriage-ways ; cheerless and depressing ;—such was the night Hugh Falcon found around him in the great city, on emerging from his club where he had dined, and over a jug of claret mused on the call made that morning to his old love,

and pondered on all she had said, and looked, and done. What should he do? was the question he asked of himself, as he drew his coat close round him, standing on the steps of the Athenæum. He had cards for two or three parties of the Mrs. Dalmaine order. Should he go to one or all of them, and sing his songs, amidst the growlings of the men that he was an ostentatious coxcomb, and the longings of simple girls to be always merry, and live in continual laughter, like that ridiculous Mr. Falcon?—No, not that one night.

With no especial object in view, only determined to avoid quarters where friends would be likely to catch him by the arm and insist on accompanying him, he walked on — through streets deserted, and silent squares — through markets busy with the poor purchasing their modest stores in a buzz of excitement, under the flare of huge gas jets, and through labyrinths of courts and lanes full of wrangling women and skulking misery; every now and then crossing

a thoroughfare, down which carriages swiftly rolled, throwing on all sides a shower bath of dark, oily slime!

After threading such an intricate web of grotesque humanity, without heeding any one before or behind him, it was almost with a start of astonishment that Hugh found his attention arrested by a group of figures sitting on the step of a church-door, under a stone covering supported by pillars.

The porch was almost of elegant structure, but it was placed in a narrow yard not nine feet wide, as if stuffed away by a caprice anxious to conceal it because it was good to be looked upon. The court was very quiet, few straggled into it, and those who did so, appeared either to have lost their way, or to be languid mortals in search of a quiet spot whereon to lie down and rest. One lamp fixed to the corner of the church, made the objects at that end of the passage dimly visible, and threw a vivid light in front of those weary toilers who, in the

dark shade of the door, were, without interchange of words, resting awhile.

One person rose slowly to his limbs and crept away ; a second soon followed the example, and in half a minute more a third departed from the cold stone that had refreshed him. There remained two women, sitting apart and strangers to each other, one with her arms folded together in a once smart cotton shawl ; the other meanly clad, as the occupant of a door-step might be expected to be, and nursing a child in her arms.

Hugh saw that they commenced talking ; whereupon he crossed over unobserved, and with a curiosity not altogether inexcusable, listened from behind one of the columns to their interview.

"It is a cold night," said the girl with the folded arms, in a thick voice.

"Very cold—I have been pinched, but 'tis warmer here, I think, than in the streets."

"Of course. One expects a yard to be warmer. But it's a bitter night for a child to spend in the open air. Whose is it?"

"Mine. Whose should it be?" answered the mother, sharply.

"I only asked."

"And 'twas my husband's too, afore he died."

"Thank God for that!" said the girl, softly.

A pause.

"Darling!" said the mother, relenting; "darling, sit nigher to me; we shall be warmer close together. I ought not to have spoken so hardly. I beg your pardon, dear."

The girl was startled at the kind tones, but she drew near in obedience to the invitation.

"You see," continued the mother, becoming communicative, "I have no one to leave Nancy with, and I could not let her be at home alone; for she can't take care of herself, and if a mishap were to come to her, I should never forgive myself. God grant his blessing to her! How sweetly she does sleep!" As she spoke, she made the child's flannel cloak (her own shawl was thin cotton) fit closer to her neck and feet.

"How old is she?"

"Past six—she's a wonderfully little thing, but extraordinary good."

"Your husband is dead, you said."

"He died long ago—just after Nancy was christened. If it had but pleased God to spare him, I should be faring better now. He was a good man—a right good man. Once, when he was ill, he said to me, putting his poor hand up to my head, and bringing it down to his mouth, 'Nancy, if I die, and God pardon my sins and take me to heaven, you'll have to die soon, Nancy, for it won't be paradise without you;' and then he cried like a child. He wasn't often so, but he was always tender."

"What became of you when he died?"

"I was very unfortunate indeed. God tried me very sore, but I doubt not in mercy, dear. You see my husband was a sailor, now working to one port and now another, and he was born abroad, so we belonged exactly to no particular place. And when he died up here in London, I was hard put to it. He, poor man, had saved a

little money ; and so I hoped to do. But I fell into a fever, and when I came round from that, my arm became bad, and I was took and put into an hospital."

As she spoke, she raised her right arm, and showed that the hand had been amputated above the wrist.

The girl gave a cry of horror. "Lor ! how was that done?"

"It was took off five years ago, in the hospital. When I was discharged cured, I had Nancy to provide for as well as myself, and only a left hand to work with. It was very hard."

"It was cruel."

"No, no, dear—not cruel, for so it pleased God. It was only hard—I wanted a start."

"And you did not get it. The rich ain't fond of giving starts to the poor," put in the girl, bitterly.

"You mayn't speak so, darling, for 'tis wrong. There may be bad among the rich—I am sure there are among the poor ; but I've found many merciful and charitable friend

amidst the powerful and wealthy. Only think o' the hospitals—built up and kept out of the purses of the fortunate! You can't think how good they were to me what time I was laid up with my arm; the doctors allus spoke gently to me as if they felt all I could tell 'em, and that without asking, and were as sorry for it as I myself was; then the young surgeon who dressed me every morning! he never tired with doing for me, cheering me up when I was down, with lively sayings, and handling me as tender as if I had been his sister or his mother. 'Sir,' said I to him, the last morning but one afore I was discharged, 'may God reward you! for I can only thank you;' and I tried to say more, but I couldn't. 'Sister,' said he, 'don't let your gratitude be a burden to you, for I'm only doing my duty—to attend to the sick is my profession.' 'Yes, sir,' I answered, finding voice, 'but we are such poor outcasts, that it seems almost demeaning to a gentleman for him to wait on us.' 'Not so,' said he, calling me

‘sister’ again, ‘it’s the noblest work we can be at. You know who passed years so doing, more than eighteen hundred years ago.’ And as his morning’s work was done, he opened my Bible and read a chapter to me. This touched me very much then, and so it has done often in the thinking of it.”

The girl sate in silence, and then folding her arms tighter over her breast, made her sullen comment. “A very good young man, I dare say; a very good man. I never said there were no good folks. The hospital doctors do their work, but then they’re paid for it.”

“No, they’re not—not a penny,” answered the woman, earnestly pleading the cause of her benefactors. “You don’t know ’em, or you wouldn’t talk so of ’em. The great doctors and surgeons, who come to the hospitals, are rich and mighty gen’lmen; live in grand mansions and ride in their carriages, and whenever they like, can earn handfuls of gold by feeling a lord’s or a duke’s pulse; yet they come to the

hospitals, where there are none but low and stricken people, and work for nothing—all for nothing—there ain't a penny of the hospital money ever reaches them."

The girl was staggered by the assurance.

"No one knowing this can talk hard things of the rich," continued the woman. "It's a difficult world we live in, I know, dear, and we ignorant ones, can't make it out; and it does make one groan and grind inside to toil along weary through the streets, hungry, and wet through, and fainting, and footworn, and to see the great and grand entering splendid shops to waste hundreds on luxuries, and to look at their carriages dashing along in which they sit easy—and we can't find a step to rest on. But whenever my heart gets jealous and discontented, I cure it in this wise,—I fix my eyes on some grand coach drawn by fine horses, with a gentleman inside, and I say to myself, 'There go a fiesishian or a surgeon a-gallop in on to the 'ospital, God bless him!' And then I feel quite

happy again—and don't grumble no more. Bless you, girl, the rich have their trials full as much as the needy ; you know what Scriptor says of them, how hard it is for 'em to enter into the kingdom of heaven ;—and I can quite understand it, for pomps and vanities are so charming, that we who can never take part in them, can't help fretting and thinking about 'em,—only fancy, *if we had 'em*, how difficult it would be not to be too fond of 'em !—Oh ! you are awake, are you ?”

The question was addressed to the child in her arms, who stretched out its hands and began to prattle.

The church-clock struck the hour of nine—slowly and heavily.

“ It'll be late afore I get home, and then it wont be no use trying to wake the beauty into understanding, she'll be so dead tired. She'd better say 'em now,” observed the woman, speaking aloud, but to herself ; and then turning to her companion, she addressed her as one lady might

a friend in her drawing-room. "Would it disturb you, dear, if Nancy was to say her prayers here? I don't like her to leave 'em 'till later than this;—and as for a place, why any place will do; but if it can't be at home, or *in a church*—why, I like the outside of one, dear. It may seem foolish o' me; but all things have their uses,—and, as I say, if there wasn't a use in them, churches wouldn't have outsides."

Folding her arms together more tightly still, and biting her lips to keep down some strong emotion, the girl said hoarsely—"Let her pray—I'll stop and listen."

Kneeling on the church step by her mother's side, with her hands folded and placed on her mother's lap, the little girl said her prayers. The black sky was above her, and the cold wet ground was at her feet, but her lips uttered the same words of supplication that children, happier in their fortunes, reared in warm nurseries with all the fostering aids of wealth, trained to wear dignity gracefully as a flower, addressed that night

to Our Father who is in heaven,—that universal prayer Christ taught us.

“She said ’em sweetly,” remarked the girl, gruffly, compelling herself to speak. “I had a little sister who used to say ’em to me.”

The woman now put her child on the stone step by her side, and with her one hand busied herself in getting out from the bottom of the basket, which she bore on her maimed arm, some bread and fragments of meat, and a long black bottle.

“Have a morsel with us, dear. Bread and meat is what it is, and i’ the bottle we have good fresh water, and here’s a little drop o’ gin to cure the cold o’ the night, which is cutting.”

“I aint hungry, thank you,” answered the poor girl. “But I must just take a crumb, if it be only to show I value your kindness. Let me nurse Nancy ; just till you are ready to take her again. Do let me have her ;—it won’t do her no harm.”

This request was put so earnestly, and with

such manifest effort, that the mother turned sharply to her and looked into her face for some seconds before she answered,—“ May you ? sure you may, dear ; and kiss her too as if she wer the little sister you spoke of.”

“ What colour are her eyes ?” the girl asked, after she had taken Nancy to her knees, and made friends with her.

“ Don’t talk of ’em, darling. If it wasn’t so dark, you’d see they weren’t to be praised,” the mother answered softly. “ Poor Nancy !—she’s blind !”

The three ate their supper without any further allusion to this painful subject, and indeed without much conversation on any matter, for Nancy and her mother had keen appetites, and devoured their wretched fragments of food with relish, and their guest apparently was habitually taciturn.

“ Well, we must be moving,” said the woman, when the repast was concluded, returning the bottle to its place at the bottom of her basket,

under the stock of combs and silk stay-and-shoe laces she was vending.

“Here’s Nancy, then,” rejoined the girl; and, she added with emotion, “I am very sorry for her, I am very grieved for her misfortune—can’t she be cured?”

The mother shook her head, and tears were in her eyes, as she answered,—“No, dear,—nought can be done for her. A gentleman, and a very charitable one too, who keeps a doctor’s shop in the Whitechapel Road, told me there was nothing to be circumvented for her, and she must even go as God made her.”

“Poor little dear! How very helpless she’ll be when you’re gone.”

“God wont desert her, darling,” answered the woman boldly. “I feel assured He won’t. He’ll raise up some one to help her; I know He will.—I’ll tell what I should wish for her, and ’tis, that some benevolent person would take and put her where she’d be very kindly treated, and where I could see her as often as I liked, and

have her taught a trade—say, basket-plaiting, and then have the same charitable person take care that she got enough work to support herself by it—for, they tell me, 't isn't always a blind hand after learning a trade can make a living against them as can see. I'd rather have this happen, than have the child gifted with the means of living outright, for there's nothing to poverty that is so sweet as independence. I know it—I know it well! When I've been so hard pressed, not being able to get enough to keep me and Nancy out of the sellings of my poor basket, that I haven't known where to look for a supper for Nancy, I've begged a penny i' the streets to find it with; but, bless you, swallowing the bread that was brought with it was like eating disgrace."

The girl assented, with uttering—" 'Tis so—'tis so."

"But Nancy wont be left alone," continued the mother. "Perhaps you think me dreaming, and apt to fancy good things; but oftentimes as

I sit a-resting, it may be i' the streets as now, or it may be at home, I amuse myself with picturing different kinds o' people, men or women, old or young, that I should like to have step forrard and do as I say for Nancy, and sometimes I even go so far as positively to see some one a-coming, and just as I say, 'ah! that's he!—God bless him!' I stare round and find there's nobody, but 'tis only my fancyings."

She was silent for several seconds, and then recommenced with increased earnestness. "He'll come—I know he will; and his goodness sha'n't be unrewarded, even in this world. I'll follow him unseen; I'll keep the very shoes he treads in out of the dirt, and he sha'n't know it; there sha'n't be harm plotting agin him anywhere but I'll know it, and save him from it. God bless him!" Her voice at length was choked to silence, and she drew her sleeve across her eyes, to wipe away the tears of gratitude shed in honour of her coming benefactor.

"I hope he 'ont be slow in coming," ob-

served the girl, rising together with her companion.

“In God’s own time—it’ll be fulfilled,” was the answer. “You know the promise—the seed of the righteous sha’n’t be forsaken, or beg their bread, and Nancy’s father was a good man, a pious man, a devout man. But, Lord take you to his keeping—are you hurt at what I’ve been a saying?”

“Don’t mind me, don’t mind me,” implored the girl, sobbing violently. “You are so good, you speak to me like a home, as if you hadn’t a scorn of me. I don’t know how I came to be so bold as to talk with you, for I haven’t exchanged words with one who wasn’t bad, for years.”

Much more of a similar purport, and in the same broken voice and forcible manner of grief, she uttered, beating her breast and stamping on the ground.

“Don’t leave me, then, if you like me,” said the woman, catching hold of the girl’s arm. “I am almost as destitute as you; but I and

Nancy have a room far away, right down in Whitechapel. Come home with us to-night and sleep along with me, and to-morrow we'll turn about and see how you can best start out to do better."

"I daren't—I can't—I wont," answered the girl in the bitterness of anguish. "I wouldn't wrong Nancy with lying my wretched body on her bed. You don't know me, or you wouldn't offer me so much. I'm a drunkard, a liar, a thief. I worn't so always, but I'm come to it. If I joined with you now, afore to-morrow I should steal your blanket and pawn it for drink. I daren't trust myself. But it don't matter what becomes of me ; it wont be for long, for I sha'n't long trouble the world." And bending forward, she whispered in the other's ear—

"Heaven help you ! Christ protect and pardon you !" ejaculated the mother. "O, pray to God before it is too late ! do, I implore you ! do pray !"

"I couldn't dare. If I uttered a prayer to

God, it would curse me, for an evil spirit would catch hold on it and carry it to the devil."

"I'll pray for you," responded the woman, softly but courageously, showing resolve in her clear, low voice, and at the same time dropping her head in humility.

But the Christian promise did not reach the unfortunate girl's ears. Gliding rapidly away into the dimness of the narrow alley, away from the church, away from the only human heart there was in the wide world to show her love, away from the rescuer she was afraid to cling to, she disappeared, leaving Nancy and her mother on the porch steps with Hugh Falcon standing by them, that cold, drear night, under the black heavens !

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCLOSURE AND A DISCOVERY.

QUOLIBET STREET is, as every one knows, one of the peculiar nests of surgeons and physicians. A large number of people who frequent Quolibet Street for medical advice are supposed, by polite society, to be altogether ignorant of the quarter of the town in which it is placed. What Lombard and Threadneedle Streets are to gentlemen of a fashion that does not permit them, under ordinary circumstances, to come eastward within sight of Temple Bar, Quolibet Street, which, by the way, is not far distant from the Bank of England, is to valetudinarians of rank.

It is, for the city, a wide thoroughfare, with stone-mounted and massive houses on either side, of which a few are devoted to offices for insurance companies, and organized swindling associations of the purest Royal Exchange morality, and one, at least, is an imposing clubhouse; but with these exceptions, all the habitations, right and left, before and behind, up quiet little courts, and round all kinds of corners, in sight and out of sight, are held by philanthropic medical practitioners, ready, for a small consideration, to alleviate human misery, or for no consideration at all, to aggravate it up to a few degrees beyond death, just by way of experiment, or scientific investigation.

After business hours in the city, Quolibet Street and its dependencies constitute the great rule-establishing exception to the desertion of the Lord Mayor's kingdom by the wealthy; for the majority of the successful doctors of the Quolibet district reside therein with their wives and families, and keep up a liberal allowance of

festivity around their Lares, in dinners, and balls, and soirées, without having their peace of mind at all disturbed by the near vicinity of the Aldgate pump. The quarter has its heroes and heroines, its prejudices and predilections, its ambitions and jealousies, its merits and absurdities, exactly as the *Close* set of a cathedral town, or the members of any semi-collegiate body have their feuds and friendships, virtues and vanities. Mrs. Archer Bezzlegreen (called Mrs. Morbid Eye Bezzlegreen, from her husband's work on that interesting subject), the allowed leader of *ton* amongst *the best hospital set*, and whose annual ball is attended by various noble patients from May Fair, has *her* opinion of Dr. Grounder's lady who, as we all know, is a very good sort of person, well intentioned and all that, but not by birth and education designed for the wife of the man who was the first to administer large doses of lemon-juice and burnt almonds in rheumatic fever. Mrs. Grounder, of course, has *her* views, in return, with regard to Mrs. Archer

Bezzlegreen, asserting that that lady is without heart, and that the only sound portion of Bezzlegreen's *Morbid Eye* was filched, without any acknowledgment whatever, from Barlow's *Retina*. The tone of conversation in Quolibet Street is also professional, and, to a slight degree, sectarian, it being understood that in certain drawing-rooms microscopic research is to be spoken of with more respect than geological investigation ; that in Professor Craskgrandle's presence phrenological discussion is to be avoided, and the Dodo to be brought on the carpet ; and that any allusion before Mr. Demonstrator Plunkett to the white of egg is identical with premeditated insult ; but in all circles, globules are regarded as the creations of a puerile heresy.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock of the morning after the porch-scene in the last chapter, and the day was fresh and clear, for the wind had risen and blown away the tempestuous clouds of the previous night, when Hugh Falcon left Gray's Inn and proceeded in the direction of

Quolibet Street, for the purpose of calling on his friend and medical adviser, George Hassell, Esq., F.R.C.S., or, as he was known in the circles of the faculty, Hassell's Aneurism. At that same time Richard Bannick, Esq., M.D., iron-grey, irritable, hook-nosed, rose from his breakfast-table on the first floor of No. 45, and pitching "The Times" newspaper to Mrs. Bannick, went to the window, and standing behind the curtain so as not to be seen, inspected the state of the street. Bannick's house was just at the bend of the thoroughfare, and was admirably adapted for a social observatory, as, indeed, Bannick himself was admirably adapted for a social observator.

"Bullock has had a good many people in," observed Dr. Bannick, testily, turning to his lady.

"How do you know?"

"His door-step shows me, to be sure, ma'am ; how the deuce else should I know except by his door-step ? Are you an idiot, ma'am ? or do you think me a fool, ma'am ?"

"His doorstep's no sign," answered Mrs. Bannick, quietly.

"How? what do you mean?"

"Mr. Bullock has it pipeclayed fresh every morning at nine, and then the servants come up the area steps with muddy shoes on, and walk one after the other into the house at the front door, so the marks of their feet may be taken for patients. I have had my eye on that step for days past, my dear; and if footprints are to be depended on, Mr. Bullock has four visitors every morning to his house who never leave. If there isn't trickery, his rooms must be full by this time, or he eats them as fast as they come in."

"As likely as not. He's rogue enough for anything," said Dr. Bannick, appeased, but not at all surprised.

After a pause of a minute, the Doctor observed, "Our door-step is in a positively disgraceful state. Tell the servants to wash it and pipeclay it every morning, my dear."

"Of course I will. I would have done so before, only I did not know if you would like it."

"Mind me, ma'am," cried the Doctor, with agitation, "I'm not going to sink into a humbug at my time of life, nor do I, so far as I can see, sacrifice professional dignity in what I have just now said. My request is a simple one—have my doorstep pipeclayed, and made to look as a doorstep in this street ought to look. That's all I say. As to your domestic arrangements, I never dictate to you, and that you know very well. If, after the step has been cleaned, you think a little exercise would do the servants good, and for purposes of health you order them to trot up the area steps and enter the front door, why, in the name of common humanity, let the poor things do what's good for them! Only, ma'am, don't think that Dick Bannick, at his time of life, is going to sink into a professional humbug; for, if you do, you'll find yourself mistaken. Dick Bannick and Abernethy are men of the same grain. By

Jove ! there are three men now standing at Hassell's door. Ten years ago, if I had been told that man was going to turn over three thousand a year in the profession, I should have said he was just as likely to turn a mangle out of it ; and now there are three men ringing his patient's bell at the same time."

"All gratuitous, every one of them ; nothing like gratuitous patients for decoy ducks ! If you only let your left hand know what your right hand does, why in a very short time one will know as much as the other," replied Mrs. Bannick, soothingly and enigmatically.

"Hallo, here's a rap !" exclaimed the Doctor, starting back. "Here, give me my spectacles, and the last number of the Medico-Chirurgical, so that I may be ready to run down."

Without any unnecessary delay, the maid-servant who responded to the summons at the front door, came up to the Doctor, who inquired, the instant she appeared, "Well, have you shown him into the consulting-room ?"

"Please, sir," answered the girl, "it weren't nobody, but a gentleman who only knocked and asked what number Mr. Hassell lived at?"

"Another gratuitous patient," put in Mrs. Bannick.

"Madam," returned the Doctor, bitterly, in the tone of a cynic, and waving his hand grandly, as if addressing a learned society; "madam, the question simply resolves itself into this—have the courage, intellectual and moral, to answer it, and don't attempt to blink facts, for truth is omnipotent. Do gratuitous patients wear bran new hats?"

"Well, my dear, as a rule they don't," answered Mrs. Bannick, candidly.

"Did you ever know a gratuitous patient—one single one, mark ye, I'm not talking of several—with a decent hat?" vociferated the Doctor, suddenly throwing himself into the character of an Old Bailey counsel. "Now, on your solemn oath, did you?"

"I can't say I ever did," replied the lady, humbly.

"I thought not," rejoined the Doctor, triumphantly. "And there, going into that illiterate donkey, Hassell's house, is the fourth new hat that has been through his door within the last ten minutes. And by the holy poker, there's the fifth! And I know him!"

"Who is it?"

"The most impudent, lying, dishonest dog there is to be found in all London," answered the Doctor, burning with rage towards Hassell, and Hassell's patients, and all the inhabitants of Quolibet Street who were more prosperous than himself. "He's Mr. Hugh Falcon."

"What! the celebrated author?"

"Celebrated author! I don't understand what you mean. I'm not aware that such a being as a successful author is in existence or, with the exception of Shakespeare, ever has been in existence. Penny-a-liners, publishers' hacks, scribblers, libel composers, rhymesters, poor

devils who can't keep themselves from starving, and ought not to be able, if they could—such scoundrels, some with more money, some with less, I've heard of. But celebrated authors ! Pugh, ma'am ! I must beg you don't again utter such nonsense."

But as Dr. Bannick is a new friend, let us leave him and cross over Quolibet Street to our old acquaintance Hugh, in Mr. Hassell's patients' waiting-room.

For half-an-hour, luckily not for two or three hours as it might well have been, Hugh had to sit in the surgeon's waiting-room, amusing himself as he was best able with scanning the appearances of the patients who dropped in to a considerable number, and with turning over the leaves of some volumes of Punch and the Illustrated London News.

By the exercise of unflagging ingenuity in cultivating these sources of pastime ; by conjecturing the maladies with which the various patients were afflicted, whether they

had fair chances of recovery—whether, if they died, their friends would have good reason to mourn ; by calculating, taking twelve patients as an average morning’s visitation, how many sick men entered that room in the course of the year ; then, supposing one out of every twenty sick men died, how many individuals since dead, had, in the previous twelve-months, stepped tremblingly through the door to enquire their doom ; and lastly, dividing the number of corpses by the number of chairs, how many in the same space of time had, in all probability, sat in that very chair he occupied ;—by such, and divers other appropriate ponderings, did Hugh contrive to push on Time out of his usual deliberate paces, till his turn for admittance to the consulting-room came, and he was announced to Mr. Hassell by a melancholy servant who looked on health as vanity, and on men as patients.

“ Well, George, you’ve a tidy assemblage of victims in the room there. If they all give you

good fees, you're not in a bad position for a contemner of wealth."

"I really don't want them to come."

"Of course not; they come. The case would be altered if they stopped away."

Mr. Hassell was a gentlemanly man in appearance, athletic and inclined to be stout, and with a face slightly florid in complexion, but thoughtful as well as benevolent in expression. His age did not exceed five-and-forty years, and his general aspect was that of a much younger man.

"And how are you? Nothing the matter, I hope," observed the surgeon.

"I am quite well, thank you. It is not about myself that I wish to occupy your attention."

"So far, so good. But, as your own health is not to be the topic of discussion, I will not allow you more than ten minutes before I have in my next patient."

"I want your opinion in the first place about

a blind child in whom I am interested, as to whether there is any chance of restoring her sight. In the second place, you must give me your advice as to the best means of getting her educated, after she shall either be cured or pronounced incurable."

"Can you give me any further particulars?"

"I do not wish to be uncommunicative, but I honestly have nothing more to say. As to my motive for taking this child under my protection, I can only say that I am under strong obligations to do so."

"I'm sorry to hear you say so," replied the surgeon gravely, shaking his head. "Sorry for your sake—and for hers."

There was an awkward silence.

"You misunderstand me, and I may not allow you to do so," said Hugh, breaking the pause. "I must be more candid; but first, you must make me a promise."

"It is made."

"'Tis to let all the pecuniary burden of the

undertaking I have in hand rest on my own shoulders, even to permitting me to pay you the customary fees for your care of the child.—I must insist on this.—You wont find me less ready than heretofore in availing myself of your gratuitous aid in my own hours of indisposition ; but if you assist me in the present instance, it must be as my workman.”

“I’ve already promised.”

With a smile of gratitude for the assurance, Hugh forthwith gave his friend a narrative of the particulars of the scene at the church-porch.

“Now you have the entire case before you,” he said, on concluding his statement. “Here is the poor creature’s address, and she will remain at home till she shall see you or me.—There is nothing more for me to add.”

“I’ll do all I can for her,” said Hassell, his tongue faltering slightly and his eyes becoming just a twinkle brighter than usual. “But why not let me be your coadjutor, Hugh, instead of your workman? You shall supply any money

the case may require, but let me *give* my services."

"You remember your promise?" rejoined Hugh, sharply. "By your honour you shall abide by it. 'Tis no merit in me wishing to do this charity, but selfishness—a superstitious selfishness. I heard that woman last night say what should be the reward of the man who did her this service, and she will not fail to keep her word. She vowed she'd guard my life from some great evil,—and (you may smile) her faith, strong enough to bring the heavens down to the earth, will accomplish her purpose ;—and you sha'n't share the prize."

"My last objection to your plan has been made. Henceforth, I will be your obedient servant."

Hugh rose to leave, and was repeating his thanks to his friend for his goodness, when Mr. Hassell checked him with—"By the way, have you been up to the Regent's Park to your relations lately?"

"I am ashamed to say I have not been for the last fortnight. But Emily sent me a line four days ago, notifying that all was well."

"So she would say, if she were dying with trouble. But I know what that means. The old man, if he doesn't die, will drive her mad. He daily gets more irritable, and his delusions grow more painful to witness ; but she will not listen to any proposition for finding him another nurse. She does not look nearly so well as usual. Don't forget to call and cheer her up when you can."

"Don't reproach me any more with my neglect."

"I am not doing that, my dear fellow," answered the surgeon, warmly. "You are all goodness."

"When I think of it, and am in the mood."

"Have you seen Harvey lately?"

"Yes—and he sent me an invitation yesterday to dine with him next week. He's a good old

fellow, and a genuinely benevolent man—though he is a radical.”

“Faugh! keep that nonsense for the papers.”

Hugh laughed at the reproof. “But I wonder,” he added, “what will be the conclusion of his attentions to Emily. Will he make her an offer?”

“Yes,” replied Hassell, with great tenderness. “Most assuredly he will; and I dread it for both of them,—it will give her such exquisite pain to refuse him, and the refusal will cut him to the heart.”

“I wish she had more hardness.”

“You would not like her less soft.”

“No—no!” answered Hugh, with a sigh.

“Tis best to be as God has made us.”

“‘Thy will be done,’” repeated Hassell, softly.

“George, when the child said those words last night, I thought of your little girls. Give my love to them.”

When Hugh had said this, the door closed upon him.

“ Poor fellow ! fine fellow ! ” observed the surgeon in soliloquy. “ Fashioned for a giant, and to do a giant’s work, but now scarcely more than an ornament and a plaything. So loveable and loved, so pitied and so pitiable ! Yet, still his heart is true.—And he looks in better health. But I am afraid that can’t last ! ”

Click ! click ! went the surgeon’s hand-bell, and immediately another patient was ushered in.

The interview with Mr. Hassell changed Hugh’s intentions with regard to the way in which he should spend the remainder of the day ; for, on turning out of Quolibet Street, instead of directing his steps to St. James’s Street, where he had contemplated looking a friend up, he proceeded by a short cut to Mr. Allerton’s house in Regent’s Park. On his route, as was but natural, all the associations by which Emily Allerton and her little nephew were united to him rose before his mind. He thought of his brother John, his constant friend in boyhood, who married Alice Allerton, Emily’s sister, when she was

not more than eighteen years old ; how he took her to India and fell at the head of his company in a bloody skirmish, leaving his young wife to give birth to a child and die—far away from England and her sister. He reflected how for years Emily had been to him all she could have been, had he been her brother; how cheerfully she had undergone the privations of poverty and performed the tedious offices of attendant on her afflicted father ; how beautifully she filled the place of mother to his nephew, how unceasingly her powers of exertion and endurance were tried ! Something of wonder broke upon him that she, so gentle and so brave, so graceful and so strong, with so much to distress and so little to encourage her, was not more constantly an object of his anxiety and admiration.

“ At one time,” pondered Hugh to himself, “ I thought Everitt would fall in love with her—but perhaps his seeing so much of her, and being so familiar with her excellences, prevented his becoming a worshipper. Anyhow, there is no

hope of that now. 'Tis a desperate game he is playing. Without a doubt the devil has led him into temptation ; for, if there is one thing more calculated than another to demoralize a young man of a superior nature, it is for him to fall in love with a vain woman of the world who is above him in social position. Such an ambition stimulates the mean—but only degrades the noble. I'll put that sentiment down in my note book for the advancement of belles lettres."

Emily was very glad to see him, when he surprised her by appearing in the middle of a reading lesson she was giving to Arthur.

"My dear brother Hugh, what a sunshine you are !" she exclaimed, making the most of her relationship to her visitor. "Mr. Harvey has just gone into papa's room, and will chat with him for an hour, so your very obedient Emily Allerton can conscientiously enjoy your society for a while. Arthur, my magnificent, put away your books, and tell your uncle he has no business to bring so pale a face up to Regent's Park."

Her cheerfulness did not seem forced, but Hugh detected an unusual delicacy in her complexion, and saw that she was thinner than she had been weeks before.

"Never mind my pale face.—How do *you* come to be so out of condition?"

"I won't deny the charge, for I am at the end of next week going to be put *into condition*. Mr. Harvey is going to take us all down to Slaughton Hill for a month. Arthur will have his pony,—papa delights in the prospect, and Kate Nugent is to be our hostess. You must come down, and watch me as I advance *into condition*."

"Such language to use to Emily!" observed Master Arthur, indignantly. "Out of condition indeed!—That's what Mr. Harvey said my pony was, when he ordered Mr. Ring to give it more corn."

Hugh had plenty of materials, both in occurrences and powers of description, wherewith to make his call an enlivening change to Emily. He had seen some pictures lately by artists she

especially admired ;—he had literary gossip to impart, and he found it was incumbent on himself to enter into the details of some new scribbling engagements he had made with proprietors of magazines. In answer to Emily's enquiry whether he had been very gay lately, he gave running accounts of the different parties he had been to, and amongst them Mrs. Dalmaine's proceedings figured. But, strange to say, Hugh did not mention even the name of Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough.

“Mr. Brookbank knows Mrs. Dalmaine. Was he there?” Emily enquired after a pause, during which Arthur had left the room.

“Surely he was—and in great force. Some one, who did not know him, told me his appearance was that of a distinguished young man,” Hugh replied with a laugh.

“He has not been here for a month or five weeks,” observed Emily with a brightened colour, which Hugh did not observe, for he was looking out of the window.

"He is very fully occupied just now."

"In legal pursuits?"

"I'm not aware they are illegal."

"Don't tease one with miserable puns. What is he doing?"

"He is in love."

"How grave you have become!—Is the subject such an awful one?—At worst, the malady is not uncommon," replied Emily, merrily.

"'Tis no jesting matter.—Death is common, but not ludicrous on that account," rejoined Hugh, responding to Emily's banter with a droll assumption of solemnity.

"Who is the lady?"

"Miss Julia Leatheby."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Yes."

"Of good family?"

"Yes."

"Is she an heiress?"

"Of course. Everitt would not think of making matrimonial overtures to a poor woman

He is a philosopher, and admires Aristotle, who, with an especial view to London fortune-hunters, remarks, 'wherefore it is matter of necessity, in a polity of this kind, for opulence to be respected, more especially, where they are governed by women, as is the case with the greater number of these fierce and warlike nations beyond the Celts.' "

"Is she clever?"

"About the most talented and accomplished girl I know."

"Then what is there to desire?"

"Honestly, Emily, I have no right to say that Miss Leatheby lacks anything we should wish for in Hugh's wife. But I am instinctively repelled by her, and I find myself, unjustly, perhaps, accusing her of being a heartless coquette."

"Has Mr. Brookbank had good opportunities of ascertaining her character?"

"Literally, none. She is much admired in society, as she would be, even if she had not four or five thousand a year, and having taken

it into her head to approve Everitt, she manages to have him follow in her train wherever she goes ; but in private he never sees her—for the simple reason that she is one of those girls who are never in private when a second person is present. He is frantically in love, but it is altogether with a creature of his imagination. To a man of his temperament, beauty is language, and he interprets it by a key taken from the poetry and purity of his own mind.”

While saying this, Hugh was gazing into the fire, with his face turned from Emily who was sitting at the table playing with a folio of water-colour sketches. But as he concluded the sentence he raised his eyes to her:—and they saw, what caused him to rise hastily, put a supporting arm round her waist, and with his disengaged hand raise a glass of water to her lips. She was deadly white, and had almost fainted.

Recovering herself with an effort of agony, she rose to her feet before two minutes had

elapsed, and advancing to the door, said with quiet firmness.—“Thank you, Hugh. I require no more help now.—Keep here for five minutes; at the end of that time, I will return, if able to do so. If you should not see me again, at the end of that time, leave the house without making any observations about me.”

She quitted the room, but before the expiration of the fifth minute, reappeared, pale and sad—but calm and restored.

“Hugh,” she said softly, “you have discovered my secret ;—it is safe with you—safe as if it had been whispered into a mother’s ear. You wont think the worse of me—you know my life since I was a little child—you can make great allowance for me, and you have suffered as I do now.—God bless him, and protect him from grief!—God bless you too, Hugh ;—for you have always been a dear brother to me. Come and see me as often as you can ;—but you must never allude to this subject to me, any more than you may breathe a hint of it to living

person ;—still it shall be another tie of affection between us, besides those which are sanctified by the grave.—Perhaps, this has come to me as a punishment for, in weak moments, repining at my life of duties, and longing to be relieved from it, and taken to one of pleasures.—Go now, Hugh, and don't let the remembrance of this interview depress you.”

Trembling, Hugh took her proffered hand, and pressed it to his lips. Tears fell from him as he did so ; but in Emily's blue eyes there was no sign of dejection, and her slight hand was firm.

A quarter of an hour after Hugh had departed, little Arthur re-entered the drawing-room, and found his aunt sitting at the window in sorrowful composure. Taking up a position before the fire, he watched her in silence for several minutes, and then approaching her, and twining an arm round her neck, petitioned, “Emily, dear, let us go out in the park now for a walk. The sun is shining, and if we cloak

up well, it wont be too cold for you. Do, please."

"You forget, Arthur, you are going to ride."

"I don't wish to ride," responded Arthur.

"Give me a reason for this whim, and then I'll gratify you."

Arthur eyed her wistfully, and after a little consideration, replied, "You see, Emily, you don't look happy and like yourself. And when you are so, you always get more cheerful directly you begin to do something for somebody. So I want you to take me out for a walk."

"You're a good child, my magnificent," replied Emily, patting his head. "You are always near to remind your aunt of her duty when she forgets it."

Ere long, she was fulfilling her promise to Arthur, by trotting with him backwards and forwards in the private garden of the park, by the side of the ornamental water. The wind, that whistled round her, and beat against her fur wraps, was cold, but the sun did his best to

warm it ; and in like manner Emily's heart was discomfited, but her courage did its best to cheer it.

That night, after Mr. Allerton's tea had disappeared, after the long, wearisome games of backgammon had come to an end, after the poor old man, feeble, irritable, and insane, had been conveyed to his bed and was asleep, Emily knelt at the window of her room, and looking out on the park lying in the cold moonlight, meditated on the past, and turned her gaze, now clear, now dim and wandering, to the future. She thought of all the good and inspired men who from the creation of the earth had, each in his own age, laboured for others, careless of themselves, regardless of suffering, not anxious for fame, not even wanting their print on the sands of time to be a mark to human eyes of human step, but preferring that their labour should bear the fruit of a nameless addition, to be perceived only by the unseen, to the happiness and goodness of man. Had she, too, not

duties to perform, the faithful discharge of which would be an acceptable service of praise and thanks to God? Had she not Arthur to love, and protect, and instruct? Had she not soil, ample and rich, wherein to plant her little mustard-seed, that might, even when she was no more, flourish a noble tree, and harbour the birds of heaven?

CHAPTER X.

KATE NUGENT.

AFTER Hugh Falcon left Quolibet Street, Mr. Hassell saw about a dozen patients, one after another in succession, and having put down two of them in the gratuitous list Dr. and Mrs. Bannick were so severe upon, hurried off to his hospital, where for three hours he occupied himself with downright toil, requiring nerve and muscular strength as well as skill, which no prosperous and hard-worked man in London, not a surgeon, would dream of undergoing without handsome payment. It was past three o'clock in the afternoon, when, his duties of charity in

the wards accomplished, he jumped into his brougham and ordered the driver to convey him briskly to Whitechapel Church.

“Let’s see, most of these people can wait till to-morrow or the next day,” he observed to himself during the transit, as he passed his eye over a list of the patients then under his attendance. “There’s Colonel Gandy to take nothing but arrow-root and barley-water till he sees me,—then I’d certainly better not call on him. Lady Alice Marlow was at two balls last night, the paper says, and is to be at Hinden House to-night, so she’ll be quite well till to-morrow. Sloper, Hilversley, Brown, Smithies, Tomkins — they don’t want me. I really do not see any necessity for returning to town to-night. It would be nice to have the evening for a holiday. Perhaps I could induce Miss Nugent to spend an hour with Polly and Polly’s brother. No, I can’t do that, though ; I must see poor Mrs. Crofton, of Bayswater, for, as she does not pay me, she must not have reason to deem me careless.”

Springing to the ground immediately his carriage stopped at Whitechapel Church, he told his servant to await his return there, and quicker than his words were uttered, crossed the road, and turned down an obscure street. Ten minutes' rapid walking brought him into as horrible and impure a spot of foul drains, destitution, and violence, as can be found even in that delightful quarter. The alleys, that crossed and threaded each other like net-work, were alive with cadaverous and tattered and bespattered objects, bearing a faint resemblance to men, women, and children, who sidled, and slipped, and shambled about, parleying with each other in snarls and shrieks. Having worked through the worst portions of this revolting region, Mr. Hassell came upon a comparatively decent collection of yards which, though full of the evidences of poverty, were not without occasional tokens of healthy sentiment. Here and there pots of flowers were to be observed slowly dying in windows, or blackbirds in cages nailed above

garret casements, cheeped out dolefully their reminiscences of, or aspirations for, the country ; children were not so universally sprawling in the black gutters, but were nursed and cared for, instead of being struck and spurned by their mothers ; dog-torture and kitten-driving were less popular amusements ; and the adult portion of the community seemed to entertain juster notions of the dignity of labour—for there were more of them occupied in shoemaking and tinkering than in idling about, staring listlessly at each other, and chatting fiercely about nothing.

“ Am I far from Cowley Rents ? ” inquired Mr. Hassell, of an old man.

“ Turn to your left and you’ll see the church. Cowley Rents is behind it,” was the answer.

Following the direction, George Hassell soon found himself in Cowley Rents (a long, dismal, musty, passage), and entering the open door of No. 87,

“ Does Madge Gardiner live here ? ” he in-

quired of a stout woman sitting on the stairs at the end of the contracted vestibule.

"What do you want on her?"

"I am a doctor," replied Mr. Hassell, avoiding the question.

"All right, doctor," rejoined the woman, rising briskly. "Madge is my lodger, and a decent woman she is, too. She has been awaiting for you all the day; I didn't believe you'd come—you have, though. But as to your doing anything for the child's eye—it's all mine." And so saying, this singular portress winked derisively.

"But I can see her?"

"Certainly; and very good it is of you to come, doctor. Straight up till you can't go no further, and then knock—that'll bring her, I'll be bound."

Having climbed the dark and cramped staircase, Mr. Hassell found himself unable to advance except through a door which was opened, before he applied his hand to it, by a thin,

delicate woman, not more than five-and-forty years old, but, from the influence of bodily suffering and poverty, having the appearance of being over fifty.

"You are Madge Gardiner?" enquired Mr. Hassell.

"The same, sir."

"Your little girl has the misfortune to be blind."

"It has so pleased the Almighty, sir."

"I'm a doctor. A friend of mine has sent me to look at her."

"I'm truly grateful."

The attic was so low, that in the highest part of it Mr. Hassell was scarcely able to stand upright, but it was very clean; the floor was clean, the meagre furniture was clean, the quilt on the truckle bed was almost white, the ceiling had clearly been recently whitewashed by an inexpert hand, the striped calico curtains of the window were free from stain or taint of dirt, no dust rested on the ledges, and the handles of

the poker and the shovel were bright with being burnished. Even adornment had been attempted, for on one wall appeared, in narrow black frames, two pictures of sacred subjects.

“I’m truly grateful, sir, to the gentleman who mentioned me to you—and to you likewise for coming,” said the woman, with a movement of deference. “Would you oblige me by taking a seat?”

As she spoke, she threw an apron over the only chair her apartment contained. Mr. Hassell accepted the throne thus prepared for him, and, when the woman brought Nancy to him, he took the little creature in his arms.

“I must have a better light,” he observed, moving towards the window, with Nancy in his embrace.

For a short time he made a careful investigation into the state of the child’s eyes, and then, the examination being concluded, said, “There’s no reason why all this should not be set right. How do you like that news?”

"'Tis too good," said Mrs. Gardiner, her eyes sparkling.

"And now, Mrs. Gardiner—" recommenced the surgeon, after a pause.

The woman started.

"What is the matter? I don't frighten you?"

"Excuse me, sir, excuse me. I have been so long called Madge."

"You don't object to my addressing you as Mistress?"

"You're too good," she answered with difficulty—the kindness with which she was treated overcoming her.

"Come, come, don't break down. I can't stop many minutes with you, and yet we must say a good deal to each other. The gentleman who spoke with you last night is a very intimate and dear friend of mine; he has told me all he knows of your past troubles and difficulties—and that is as much, I suppose, as I need know at present; the only remark on it I'll make, is to

assure you I'm very sorry for it all, and to hint that I feel sure brighter days are in store for you."

There was an indescribable healthiness of simplicity in the tone and manner with which he said these few words.

"Now, the best plan I can think of for Nancy, is for me to take her while she is under treatment] into my hospital, where you'll be able to see her every day, and there to do my best for her."

"Will there be any danger, sir?"

"None. The worst that can happen from what I shall do, will be that she wont be benefited by it. And the pain will be only a trifle."

"I'm obliged, sir."

"When we have done our best to give her sight, we shall have to think about her education. One of my friends is a lady, the best and most pious woman the whole world has, who spends her life in doing works of goodness, and

has amongst other institutions a large school for poor children under her control. I purpose asking this lady to come to our assistance—either to take Nancy into her own school; or, in case she does not obtain her sight, to procure her admission into an establishment for teaching blind children trades. Does this meet your views?”

“Don’t ask me, sir. ’Tis what I’ve always dreamed on.”

“And, now, one word about yourself.”

“Not about myself, if you will have the goodness, sir, do not. Enough has been done for me now—all that I have ever prayed for. I’ve got gratitude enough in me to be rightly grateful for this great benevolence; but you mayn’t overdo me with mercies.”

“But you would not refuse to be removed from the hard life you at present lead. If we could place you beyond the reach of cruel necessity——”

“I wouldn’t wish you to do so—I wouldn’t

indeed, so don't tempt me. You couldn't easily find me employment, sir, that I with my lamed hand could do, and I shouldn't like to be a weight on any one, least of all on those who were helping Nancy. The rich have many calls on 'em, more than they can answer to, and I shouldn't like, while living easy myself, to feel that I was sucking up to myself all the charity that might go to comfort and support a dozen. There are plenty that require aid more than I. For though I amn't strong, no one can call me weakly; and by my present labours, which are honest, though lowly, I can keep myself a-going."

"Well, well," Mr. Hassell rejoined, smiling, "we'll talk of this again. Anyhow you will know where to look for friends."

"If I might be assured o' that, it wod be better than money—it wod be dearer than untold gold. If I could know that you, sir, would learn to consider of me not so much as an unfortunate wretch, little removed from a beggar,

whom you had given comfort and good deeds to, but more as a woman whom you had reason to feel warmly to—I am not so bold as to say more—as you would feel to one striving to be right in a more favourable worldly position than my low one, it would make my life better, my heart more cheerful, and my mind more Christian. Only, sir, don't press more gifts upon me. You're very generous, but you can't give me love and money both—leastwise, I cannot receive 'em.”

This strange entreaty (startling even to George Hassell, who was familiar with the poor, and understood the meaning of “having seen better days,” as used in “a low district”) was made in a mild, weak voice, and in a deferential and grateful manner, but with that firmness and conciliating courage, which are the ensigns of true nobility wherever they are found.

“You shall have both, whenever you like to accept them—my love and goodwill you *must* always have.—Dry your eyes, sister,—dry your

eyes, or you'll bring the water into mine also, and that you'd be sorry for.—What say you?—will you call with Nancy at my house to-morrow, any time between nine and twelve in the morning?—Can you manage this?”

“If you will let me know where it is?”

Mr. Hassell gave his address, and with a few more kindly sentences took his leave.

“He's another of 'em!—he's a 'ospital surgeon—God bless him!” said Madge Gardner, when his retreating steps could be no longer heard by her.

“To Slaughton—as fast as you can,” was George Hassell's brief order, on again stepping into his brougham.

The mandate was obeyed to the letter, if “as fast as you can” meant “drive at twelve miles an hour;” for George's servant was longing for certain comforts his master's larder contained, and George's brougham was as light as a cockle-shell, and the horse that drew it was a fierce, high-blooded creature,

bursting with muscle, and seventeen hands high.

Slaughton, as many country men, and perchance a few Londoners, may not know, is a village on the banks of the Thames, just fairly out of the smoke of London, and in the green fields. "Slaughton Hill," an elegant mansion standing in a small but well-wooded park, overlooking the village, and on a clear day exchanging glances with the dome of St. Paul's cathedral, is the property of Abraham Harvey, the well-known capitalist and manufacturer, whose extensive factories occupy a considerable portion of the parish, adjoining Slaughton, and lying just within the embrace of one of the gigantic hands of the metropolis.

Londoners have a belief that Slaughton air is very salubrious, and to accommodate their wishes to have their families benefitted by the bracing atmosphere, houses have been built, and added to, and multiplied during the last ten or twenty years with great spirit, so that away from

Slaughton village, farther into the country and on the other side of Slaughton hill, there has sprung up quite a town of spacious residences for the wealthier of middle-class citizens.

In a goodly house in the village—a large, antique, gabled building, with leafy vines and ivy covering its walls, and standing in the centre of a well-kept garden—George Hassell had his house, wherein dwelt his sister, an amiable woman, and the two little girls his wife had given him before she was removed to a better world. When the fierce horse sprung up the drive with animated bounds, just to show that a six miles' spirt was a mere trifle, and stopped short at the front-door, a cry of delight came from the interior, which was no bad welcome to the surgeon's heart.

It was dark, the night having completely closed in, so George did not look at the straggling vine-stalks to lament that they were not in leaf, or at the garden to mourn that it was not full of flowers, but with one of his wide leaps

sprung from his carriage-step into the hall, and in another second had his two children in his arms—their flaxen ringlets blinding his eyes, their pink lips covering his face with kisses, and their blue eyes and merry voices laughing out their amusement because he was unable to pay back the salutes as fast as they gave them.

The business of dinner was commenced as soon as the cook could bring it up from the kitchen.

“I have had to make a rapid push to get down to you,” observed George, when the soup was dismissed.

“I trust you have not inconvenienced yourself,” answered sister Polly.—“We shall have a nice long evening; give me a knight, and I’ll challenge you to chess.”

“I can’t stop.”

“What?—going back to London to-night?”

“By the half past eight o’clock train. It may seem absurd to you that I have come so far to stop only a little more than an hour, but

I knew you would keep dinner waiting for me, and I did not like to disappoint you."

Sister Polly smiled.

"You're very considerate, George. Disappointment is a cruel thing to bear."

"My arrangements to-day were altogether put out by the advent of an urgent case that occupied me a considerable time."

"Have you a patient to visit in the village, before you return to town?" enquired sister Polly, the expression of her face becoming more wickedly mischievous, every moment.

George was silent, looked at his sister, tried to be dignified, strove not to be humble, broke down, and joined in the merry peal of laughter that issued from Polly's lips.

Whether Polly was silent out of compassion for her brother's state of mind, or only from a kindly wish that he should enjoy his dinner in peace, unbroken by banter, it would be difficult to decide;—anyhow, she refrained from speaking till the conclusion of the repast, except when she

gave utterance to some decidedly commonplace observation.

“Here is a bumper of port for my considerate brother, who drives six miles to spend one half hour with me. He wont stay this evening ten minutes longer than he is obliged, I see, so I’ll reward him at once,” remarked the sister demurely, when the dessert had been arranged on the table.

“Have you seen her to-day?”

“I was in the school for two hours, and she came in for a very little while ; but we exchanged a few words.”

“Did she enquire after me?”

“Your self-complacence need not be disturbed. —She did.”

George looked triumphant.

“Don’t exult,” continued the sister, “she could not do less, when speaking to your sister.”

“What did you talk about?”

“She asked me to lend her the book you

brought me home yesterday. Of course I promised to send it by the first messenger I could spare."

"That's well," exclaimed George, a gleam of satisfaction running from his eyes.

"So immediately I reached home, I despatched Robert with it to Elm Cottage."

"Psha! you were not such a noodle?"

Polly turned away without answering.

"How a noodle?" she asked, after a minute's pause, coming back from a side table with a book in her hand. "You shall have it if you'll say 'please,' and promise not to sleep in Quolibet Street for an entire fortnight, beginning from to-morrow."

"'Please'—I promise. Now give me the book."

"And now, noodle," said Polly, with bitter emphasis, "I'll be strong-minded enough to assist in packing you up in your great coat."

"You'd like her for a sister?"

"Have you my book in your hand to carry

to her?—You know, George, I think her an angel.”

Polly attended her brother across the hall, opened the door for him, saw him descend the steps into the dark garden, closed the door with an effort against the wind, retraced her steps to the dining-room, and sank into an easy chair by the fire.

“Poor George! poor George!” she communed with herself, “Kate will never have him! She appreciates him thoroughly, admires him, loves him, but she will never marry him. I can read the determination in her calm, thoughtful face. Oh, that it could be otherwise! How good she is! Too good for any one but him!”

Down through the village George Hassell took his way, till he came to the foot of the hill where, on one side of the way, stands Elm Cottage, and on the other side is the entrance to Slaughton Hill Park.

“There’s no rain, and the weather is not in-

clement. She will, without doubt, be at the evening service. Anyhow, I'll step down to St. Stephen's—'tis only a hundred yards."

So saying, he crossed the road, proceeded a few paces down a byway, and entered the churchyard of St. Stephen's, a chapel Mr. Harvey of Slaughton Hill had built at his own cost for the convenience of the village, and more especially for the use of his workmen in the adjacent suburb of London and his other operatives in the city, whom he used to encourage to spend their fine Sundays in the green fields adjoining Slaughton. In another minute George Hassell was one of a rather numerous congregation, mostly from the working classes, in the interior of the sacred building. The evening service was read by a clergyman with a soft and musical, and at the same time earnest, voice; and portions of the Psalms and the Evening Hymn were sung with pathetic power by the entire assembly, the voices of the mass being led by a detachment of school-children, and the music of

them all being controlled by a well-toned and well-managed organ. The chapel was remarkable for a few of the more simple and unobtrusive of those mediæval decorations which have at times excited so much religious animosity in the minds of those who place too much stress on trifles, and who deem that our spiritual enemy has the good taste to prefer a richly-carved oak-bench to a rudely-constructed deal form, fresh from the carpenter's plane, or from a pot of white paint.

As the congregation dispersed, a lady, dressed in black, with a veil brought forward though not drawn over her face, and attended by a female servant, passed down the aisle, now and then stopping to look a kindly greeting to her poorer acquaintance. When her eye fell on George Hassell, standing near the door, and evidently waiting her approach, a slight flush of surprise, of pleasure, and of trouble crossed her pale face.

“ Mary hoped to have a long evening with

you at chess, she told me this morning," the lady said when they were out of the church.

"She has to be disappointed, for I must catch the next up-train. I have in my hand a book she desired me to give you. Shall I entrust it here to Esther?—But she has enough to do with her lantern; so allow me to accompany you to your door, and leave it there."

"Thank you. Have you been hard at work to-day?"

"Pretty well. You, I suppose, also have not been idle. But to-morrow will be your great day of exertion. Could I be of any service to you?"

"No, no," was the answer, accompanied with a laugh that in the dark declared the face it came from to wear a humorous expression. "You can employ your time better than in making yourself useful to a clothing club."

"Not more agreeably, though."

"Another such speech, and you shall pay a fine in a double subscription to the Clothing Fund."

"I have, I think, this morning found occasion for your services in aid of a friend of mine, who has a charitable undertaking in hand. I cannot speak more fully on the subject, for time would not permit me, and I must, before communicating particulars to you, obtain my friend's permission to do so."

"You know it will give me great pleasure to be of any assistance to you. I do not need to assure you of that. When will you admit me into your confidence?"

"May Polly and I spend an hour with you to-morrow evening?"

"Certainly. Esther, you must provide extra cups of tea."

"Yes, ma'am," returned the maid.

"There's the bell!" exclaimed Miss Nugent.

"You must run to catch the train."

George signified his assent by giving the book into Esther's hands and running off, putting an end to this interesting interview in the dark by a cordial but hasty "farewell."

CHAPTER XI.

SLAUGHTON HILL.

ABRAHAM HARVEY, Esq., M.P., was a man (and at this outset of the chapter the reader may be informed he may use the present, instead of the past tense, in all that relates to Mr. Harvey's character, for such as he was eight or ten years since, such, thank God ! he is now) whom the world spoke of in divers strains. By some he was esteemed excellent, by some as very trim-perry ; there was a party who contemned him for a mean and stingy spirit, and an opposition who lauded him for generosity and courage.

Born in a workhouse, educated in early child-

hood at a charity school, made over at the tender age of twelve years as a parish 'prentice to a drunken fishmonger, he, without doubt, saw in his legal infancy a rough side of life. But he managed to rise—neither by fawning on his superiors, nor by plundering the weaker than himself, nor by selling his soul nor mortgaging it in any way to the powers of evil, but by being stronger in body, stronger in mind, stronger in purpose, and stronger in goodness than the generality of men, whether born in workhouses or elsewhere. Those ingenious writers are not rare in our literature who boldly declare, or dexterously insinuate, that "lowly people" never advance themselves to eminence, unless they are the creatures of "low" ambition, thirsting for wealth, careless of, or even delighting in all human misery not immediately affecting themselves, and animated by a ferocious vulpine hate for "the bloated haristocracy." To these teachers and their followers it must either be incredible, or very painful, that Abraham Har-

vey, almost literally picked out of a gutter, became, through honourable exertion, a capitalist ere he was forty years old, and a member of the House of Commons ere he was fifty.

In the city he was very popular ; men liked dealing with him, for they were secure of not being over-reached, and felt that his nod was more to be relied on than most other persons' deliberate assurances ; charity dinners sought him out more perseveringly even than they did the old Duke of Cambridge ; decayed clerks, whose characters were decent, used by strange luck to be continually meeting him ; and wealthy merchants respected his manly virtues almost as much as they did his money.

In Westminster the case was very different. Noble lords and honourable members were continually sneering at him, and attacking him in those polite terms in which very well-bred men at times envelope very vulgar sentiments. Coming from the people—"the very *dregs* of society," as young Conservative members were fond of

repeating, with a bitter emphasis on “dregs” — Abraham Harvey was such an audacious scoundrel as to remember the fact, and positively not to be ashamed of it. Sent into parliament by a constituency of working men, he was so purblind as to deem it his duty to call the attention of his brother legislators to the condition and interests of the people. A man of business, accustomed to the management of pecuniary transactions, and in early life to very small ones, and having been taught by experience the effects of poverty on the poor, he felt that the raising taxes so as not to depress the poor, and the spending public money so as to buy the greatest possible amount of happiness with it for the nation at large, were subjects not to be treated lightly. To distributing annual pay to gentlemen who did nothing for the state, as a reward for their never having done anything for themselves, he had decided objections.

He was laughed at for wasting his valuable intellects in trying to save a few ignominious

halfpence to each labourer in England; and instead of being silenced, he rejoined that a few halfpence were no mean trifles to a labourer—sometimes even saving him from crimes, sometimes helping him on his way to heaven.

Now all this made Abraham Harvey, M.P., very obnoxious to a certain set in St. Stephen's.

"Confound the man! he's always interfering with what doesn't concern him. What should he know about sinecures? he never possessed one," said my lord on the treasury bench to his conscience.

"Such a low dog, always talking about the people and the dregs he came from," whispered Leonard Millicent, Esq., M.P., with a sinecure, as well as a good fortune his father made for him in trade.

"It is what we get from that blessed Reform Bill of *ours*, Millicent," replied Edward Cornbury, who at the passing of the Reform Bill had not received his first whipping at Eton.

"Everything mean that fellow has a passion

for," continued Leonard, in a whisper ;—" all poor devils who can't help themselves, all weak wretches who've been knocked down and can't get up, he is everlastingly running to protect."

" 'Tis so ;—but how the deuce should you expect anything like chivalry out of a fellow born in a workhouse ?"

Poor Abraham was roughly handled, being not only pooh-poohed and coughed down in the house, but reviled out of it. Those journals that upheld the everlasting principle that the upper-crust is not made of the same flour as the under-crust, and laughed at the "rights of the people" and the "majesty of mud," were very violent on his principles—paying, as they did, so much respect to "the people," to which body of course the writers in the said journals did not belong, and so little respect to our hereditary noblesse, of which order, as a matter of course, the said writers were members.

The war waxed fiercer as "the low fellow" waxed stronger ; and soon every personal pecu-

liarity of "the upstart" was made a mark for ridicule to aim at. Occasionally, when he grew excited in debate, he dropped his h's; this very rarely happened—but often enough to justify the assertion that, if Mr. Harvey's word could be trusted (which, of course, it could not), he had never in his life addressed the House of Commons.

His features were not what is called classical or *aristocratic* (for, as is well known, the English aristocracy have one uniform cast of countenance); but he had a broad and embrowned face, which, of course, no gentleman ever has; and he had a snub nose, a misfortune never bestowed on any but low fellows;—so caricatures of him in lithograph were sent through the country, rendering emphatic these points in his appearance. If he uttered (as he frequently did) a sentence of eulogy on the patriotism and virtues of the upper classes of England, the journals were smart on his being at last ashamed of the workhouse, and being anxious to wear

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plush in a palace. When he alluded (as he did once — and only once) to the hardships and sufferings of his opening manhood, it was remarked that he never let an opportunity slip him of obtruding his sores and degradation before the world, with the whining cant of a professional beggar.

£ s. d. was the only subject he could get up any enthusiasm for. He was a grinding tyrant, extracting an enormous income from the toil of the multitude — an income he had not the courage to spend, even penuriously. He would buy everything as he would a beefsteak, at its market worth ; if asked to choose between Christianity and Mahommedanism as a religion for the state, he would learn which could be supplied at the smaller price, and decide in favour of the cheaper !—So said the papers.

Mr. Harvey's life at Slaughton Hill was passed in strict seclusion, broken only by visits from a few very intimate friends, of whom George Hassell and his sister, Miss Nugent and the Allertons of Re-

gent's Park were the most valued. Between him and Miss Nugent there was some close tie—of that the Slaughton inhabitants were well aware—but whether the bond was one of relationship, or dependance, or simply of affection, they could not decide.

Miss Nugent's cottage, which stood on the merchant's estate, indeed in a corner of his modest park, was daily visited either by Mr. Harvey himself, or by a servant from Slaughton Hill, bearing a note, a message, a present of game or fruit, or a parcel of some kind. Elm Cottage had no stabling accommodation, so Miss Nugent's pony and phaeton were taken care of in the Slaughton Hill establishment; and in rainy and inclement weather a close carriage from the same quarter was always at her service. The schools Mr. Harvey had established were under her control; the hospital he had founded was under her supervision; the chapel of St. Stephen, which we have already entered, though erected at his expense, was built after

her designs. For years this intimate relation had existed between the lady and the owner of Slaughton Hill, so that in the neighbourhood it was understood that, for all charitable purposes, Miss Nugent was the real possessor of her friend's wealth.

Of Miss Nugent's private history, the curious of her neighbours had only very scanty materials. From her appearance, and from the fact that she had resided nearly twenty years by herself in Elm Cottage, they knew she must be over forty years of age. When she first entered that habitation, in the second year of Mr. Harvey's residence at Slaughton Hill, she was young, very pale and emaciated, as if from recent and severe illness, was always dressed in black, and wore a slight white cap—not a widow's cap, but something like one—which proclaimed that its wearer, though young, wished those who came in contact with her not to bestow those peculiar attentions on her which are shown to youth and beauty. Immediately, she commenced the life

of a sister of charity, visiting the poor, instructing in schools, and ministering to the sick ; and from that time, without relaxation of energy, she had persevered in this course of self-elected duty—every succeeding year increasing the scale of her benevolent operations, and manifesting that she was more than ever devoted to her pious career.

Twenty years of this life had made little difference in her aspect or her character. Her face was still pale and pensive ; her form was still slight and fragile, little betokening the strength and powers of physical endurance she possessed ; and her dark eyes were still fascinating with an expression given them by sorrow, the memory of which could never be effaced. Time had mingled a few threads of white with her brown hair, and with them had given her something more of serenity and elasticity of mind,—but, otherwise, she was the same, even to her dark dress and plain white cap.

Thus much, and little more, did the Slaughton

gossips knowabout her. Beholding the vague outline of her charitable labours, they believed her to be a sincerely good woman ; her manners they allowed to be gentle and conciliating, and it was clear even to those who only casually conversed with her, that she was highly educated and conversant with the world, as well as refined in tastes and devout in aspirations ; but they were annoyed they could not learn more of her—whose child she was, where she had dwelt, and what done as a girl. And, perhaps, they were slightly piqued in her maintaining so strict a domestic privacy, admitting no one to her abode but Mr. Harvey, George and Mary Hassell, the clergyman of St. Stephen's, Emily Allerton, and two or three other especial friends. A few there were whose vexation was compelled to find vent in anxious doubts as to her orthodoxy. “ A very good woman she is, and has done great things for the poor, without ostentation, and I must own that in the observance of her religious duties she is very unobtrusive of her own peculiar views, but—”

and here Mrs. Pendle would pause, fold her hands, and look doubtfully at Dr. Pendle, the principal medical practitioner of the village. "Sadly narrow-minded, my dear—sadly narrow-minded!" the doctor would respond; "she runs a good chance of going over."—"A good chance of going over! why, she is half-way over already," Miss Pendle would observe, shaking her head gloomily at the prospect of the demi-going-over in question being converted into a whole one.

The demands which his commercial engagements and his political duties made on his attention, secured Mr. Harvey from requiring the pleasures of society for the purpose of driving away ennui. Every morning saw him in his factories and in the city, and every evening when the House sate saw him in his place in the Commons. His business friends he entertained at his clubs, and his political friendships he cultivated in Pall Mall and Westminster; it was rare that any guests, with the exception of the Hassells, Emily Allerton, and Miss Nugent,

and their especial adherents, were invited to Slaughter Hill.

The seclusion of that spot Mr. Harvey guarded with strict jealousy ; and a delightful place, worthy in every respect of his care, that spot was. The park descended, from the table on which the mansion was placed, in graceful undulations to the Thames ; the trees were numerous, well-grown, and of the best timber ; the conservatory, ample and magnificent enough to stand by the side of a ducal palace, was stocked with an abundance of the rarest flowers and shrubs, which were collected from all the quarters of the earth, and were nursed by the best gardeners money and praise could procure ; the grounds devoted to horticulture were laid out with exquisite taste, and contained almost as many fountains as parterres ; the few horses the stables contained were of pure breed, and remarkable for beauty ; and the house itself, not at all too large for the country box of a bachelor of Mr. Harvey's wealth, was appointed with an equal regard to

elegance and comfort, and contained, in painting, statuary, and china, a collection interesting to artists. Once every year, for a month in the autumn, Slaughton Hill was alive with staying guests,—Emily Allerton and her father, Miss Nugent, George Hassell and his sister, and occasionally Hugh Falcon and Everitt Brookbank, forming a circle round the benevolent proprietor ; and it was rare that a week passed in which those of the above, who dwelt in the village, did not come up to Slaughton Hill for an evening of music and conversation ; but with these exceptions Mr. Harvey's retirement was unbroken, and he was left to the solitary enjoyment of his flowers, paintings, and music—to each of which he was passionately devoted. Certainly, at Slaughton Hall he seemed to have a taste and ideas beyond pounds, shillings, and pence.

It has already been shown, in more places than one, that Mr. Harvey was attentive in calling on poor Mr. Allerton in Regent's Park. Their acquaintance commenced when the former first

entered the House of Commons, in which assembly the latter also had a seat. Their knowledge of each other was very slight (for they were opposed on every subject of politics and morals) till Mr. Allerton, on retiring with fading intellects and broken fortunes, from public life, was induced to have recourse to the merchant for advice on his worldly affairs. At first, the latter was not inclined to enter into a discussion on the financial entanglements of his applicant, who had throughout life shown himself a heartless, vain, and unprincipled man of pleasure. But a visit, which Mr. Harvey paid to the unfortunate man's home, the sight of Emily Allerton and her sister, then two beautiful children between thirteen and fifteen years old, and the discovery that they had no near relation to protect them, with the exception of their unworthy father, wrought a change in the mind of the man of business, who had previously determined to let the miserable old scamp who asked his aid seek help elsewhere. From that time he

occupied in reality the position of parent to the two girls.

“ They are still at their exercise ; I am afraid they’ll walk too much,—’tis the third time that they have passed the windows, and it’s at least a mile and half from one gate to the other.”

This was said by Miss Nugent to Emily Alerton, as they sat, at the opening of spring (towards the conclusion of that month’s visit Emily told Hugh she was about to make to Slaughton Hill, for the purpose of getting herself into condition), in one of the windows of a small drawing-room that commanded a view of the river, and the most picturesque portion of Mr. Harvey’s demesne. The observation was directed towards the speaker’s host, and George Hassell, who, in the cold air, and under a cloudy sky, were taking brisk walking exercise on the coach road that crossed the park, at a time midway between the ordinary hours of luncheon and dinner.

“ They are two fine men,” said Miss Nugent.

“Mr. Hassell is the younger and the handsomer ; but Mr. Harvey has the advantage in respect of stature.”

“ They are two good men,” responded Emily.

“ Would that every one knew it as well as we !”

“ The world, then, would only praise them ; and *they* do not require the encouragement of commendation.”

“ I do not want them to be loaded with flattery and adulation ; but it is cruel to me, cruel to Mr. Harvey, that he should be traduced with such malignant violence in the journals.”

“ Is he pained by such pitiful expressions of party rancour ? Surely, if he sees them, they only amuse him.”

“ You are mistaken. He loves all men too much not to be deeply moved by avowals of their hate to him. When he first entered political life,—and he did so, as you know, at the urgent request of his present constituency,—he used to show me the slanders in the newspapers with tears in his eyes ; and once he said, ‘ Per-

haps when I'm dead, men will read this and believe it.' "

" But he has consolation in the gradual triumph of his own ridiculed opinions."

" Thank God, he has ; but that is not enough."

" I wish he had a wife."

" I trust he may yet have one," replied Miss Nugent, raising her eyes and fixing them on Emily.

" Do you really think he will ever marry ?" the latter inquired, with interest.

Miss Nugent sighed, paused for a few seconds, and then slowly answered, " I am afraid—never."

" Did he ever make you an offer, Kate ?" Emily asked, simply ; " I mean, years back."

A deadly paleness shot into Miss Nugent's face that was, under ordinary circumstances, not remarkable for freshness of colour. Emily chanced not to be looking at her, otherwise she would have seen that her words had struck home to the feelings of her friend.

" Earnestly I beg of you, Emily, to dismiss

any such suspicions from your mind. How good, how noble, how generous, how considerate he has been to me for one half of my life no tongue can tell! But never once has he betrayed a feeling that either was, or could become, the love you are thinking of. If you knew some passages of our early histories—*my* early history, I mean—you would not need this assurance that Mr. Harvey has never, for one instant, dreamed of making me his wife. I wish I had courage to tell you more, that it was right for me to be perfectly open with you. But a promise to him ties my tongue; and if that were removed, cowardice would keep me silent.”

This speech was made with manifest suffering, and as she concluded, the tears fell rapidly over the speaker's face.

It was a strange position that these four friends—the two men in the park, and the two ladies in the drawing-room—occupied to each other. As George Hassell and his host strode up and down the coach-road, discussing with

earnestness the propriety of parliament allowing a new line of railway to be commenced, each had, in a retired corner of his consciousness, a picture of Miss Nugent and Emily Allerton, who, they knew, would make their six o'clock dinner an unusually pleasant one. George knew that he was deeply in love with Miss Nugent, and that he had made up his mind to conclude that, his fourth, year of diffident homage by an explicit declaration of his attachment ; he knew, also, that his companion, notwithstanding the discrepancy of age, had conceived a passionate devotion for the girl he had protected from her childhood, and with whose excellences he was familiar. And knowing this, George pitied Abraham Harvey, for he saw that his hopes were destined to disappointment. Mr. Harvey, on the other hand, was equally familiar with and equally commiserated the state of George's affections, for he was well aware that had George's advances to Miss Nugent been of a more decided character, and afforded an opportunity for

their distinct refusal or acceptance, he would long previously have been convinced that his suit could never be successful. So it was in the park ; in the drawing-room the case was somewhat otherwise. Emily was totally ignorant of the passion her good friend, Mr. Harvey, cherished for her ; had she had the slightest suspicion of it, she, of course, would not have come for a month's visit to Slaughton Hill ; but she had long discerned the especial regard Mr. Hassell bore to her friend, Kate Nugent, and had long felt assured that the moment of its avowal would immediately be followed by the commencement of deep and lasting sorrow to him. Lastly, Miss Nugent was intimate with the condition of Mr. Harvey's heart ; and was not less certain his love would be rejected, than she was assured of its existence.— Had she not for years studied his character—its fervour, its manly simplicity, its child-like freshness, and its incapability of pettiness ? and could she be in error on such a point ? In gratitude to him, and admiring love for him, was not the

ever-present wish of her heart to procure for him that which would contribute to his enjoyment? Had she not done her utmost to inspire Emily with that ardent love for her careful guardian which should make her ready to give herself to him? And was not Miss Nugent conscious of having failed in her undertaking? Nay, had she not, while making her Jesuitical endeavours, acquired information, full and complete, that Emily loved another with the high warmth of her affectionate nature, which other could never be hers?

“I was not thinking of recent days,” said Emily, after a pause, during which Miss Nugent’s excitement had subsided; “I have never imagined there was any probability of your becoming his wife, or *any other’s*.”

“I am very glad to hear you say so.”

“At one time I used to wish it might be otherwise, and that your determination might be altered. Even till lately—till within the last very few weeks—I hoped that you might make

happy a man so good—I had almost said so worthy of you—as Mr. Hassell; for though we have never exchanged one word on such a subject till to-day, I long since discerned how he loved you, and I fancied—why I cannot say—that Mr. Harvey wished that his suit might prosper.”

A blush ran over Miss Nugent’s face, for this was the first time that any one had addressed her on a subject that had occupied much of her thoughts, and caused her much uneasiness.

“I do not wish unsaid what you have just uttered, though your remarks *do* pain me,” she answered. “More than once I have thought of touching on the subject to you, for, of course, I was aware that your silence was not that of ignorance. I cannot tell you how much perplexity and annoyance I have suffered for months and months—ay, years—trying to discover some way of showing him that his wishes cannot be realized, and finding none. Mary Hassell knows well what I have in vain endeavoured to teach

him, but he will not believe from her lips that which she learnt from me. So it must continue for a little time; his imagination and love for me must still blind him to the meaning of my reserved, cold, constrained manner to him; and at last, when he asks me to be his wife, he must suffer the pain that only the finest natures experience. Oh, that I could save him from it!"

"Do you not — can you not love him?" asked Emily, pleadingly.

Again the expression of deep grief which Miss Nugent wore a few minutes previously, returned to her pale face; the dark eye flashed — as if with indignation at the enquiry; but the thin lips were pressed together to retain any irritable speech her heart might prompt her to make

In a minute the gust of feeling had passed, and she answered softly, "Emily, my own dear Emily, do not search me; do not try to read all my heart: I would not have you see it. If you perceive in me that which does not appear

reconcilable with the course I have taken in life, if you detect any sign of an affection that would, if indulged, lead me from the duties I have for long laboured to perform, do not speculate on my weakness and inconsistency, but rather encourage me to persevere, and yet the more believe that that must be fittest for me to do, which I do in spite of the opposition of selfish considerations."

"Dear Kate, you are very good," replied the lovely girl, putting her lips to those of her senior. "Do take me nearer to you, and let me know more of you, for indeed I require your assistance and your sympathy. At times I am very unhappy."

"We all are."

"And my life seems blank and useless."

"No, no—it is one of duty; it cannot therefore be fruitless."

"But it is of duty endured, not loved. I do not cheerfully acquiesce, but sullenly submit. My wretched selfish self is always before me."

“What do you find hard to bear?”

“Existence. It is very wicked, and I have striven with all my power to do better. I am steeped in discontent, and covered with dejection.”

As she said this, her manner, even more than her words, spoke of heart sadness.

“Tell me more, Emily.”

“This is quite new to me—at least in its present excess. Of course I knew that my lot was not a very enviable one, in a worldly sense ; that I had to bear many troubles, and had several onerous tasks to perform. My father had to be nursed, and Arthur to be cared for—taught ; I had to pass many days and weeks, not only away from agreeable society, but also subjected to numerous vexations. But I need not repeat them to you, who can well imagine them.”

“I know them, dear Emily ; I have watched you, and admired the cheerfulness and womanly courage with which you exerted yourself.”

“But still at the best, I never was grateful to God that he had bestowed so many blessings on me, but rather found satisfaction in reflecting that I was so little depressed by, and so little discontented with, my lot. I was always looking forward to a time when I should be removed to a brighter and happier position in life, when I should have more to gratify and less to perplex me. More than once, when my poor father has required more unceasing attendance than usual, I have regarded his demands as unreasonable, and have felt to him rather as if he was a petulant patient than a parent. A great deal of praise has been bestowed upon me undeservedly. My equable temper, good health, and hopeful disposition made my burden light; and light as it was, I was prone to look forward to the time when I should be freed from it. But now——”

“What would you have now?” Miss Nugent asked, laying her hand tenderly on Emily’s.

“Not escape from my duties, but escape from selfish despondency; not relief from my

external assailants and trials, but some protection from those that dwell and do their work within. You think me very wicked ? repining fretfully on being so lightly afflicted ?”

“ Indeed I do not judge so. And your affliction is not light ; it is not the less heavy for being made up for the most part of those petty griefs self-respect would not permit you to name ; nor is your task the less easy because much of it consists of those humble offices which are great only in their irksomeness. You needed all your happiness of temperament, of bodily strength, and of hope ; but of all these you have been robbed by a severe blow—bitter, though sent from heaven. Do you not remember the lines of the poor old poet ?

‘ All these are mine, and heaven bestows
The gifts, and yet I find them woes.’

If you have read my secret, so have I yours. Oh ! my dear Emily, how could you fear I should judge you harshly ? We are sisters in

suffering, ought we not also to be sisters in charity?"

Much more these two gentle women said to each other, the matter and form of which can be easily supplied by any man whose heart has conversed with that of a pious mother, or who has spoken earnestly on sacred things to the sister of his childhood, or who has knelt in prayer with a good woman. And on him who has done no one of these three things, may the Just God have especial compassion!

The great front door of the house opens, steps and voices are heard in the hall; then the door of the drawing-room turns on its hinges, and Mr. Harvey and George Hassell enter the apartment—now dim in dusk-light.

"Ah! you alone?" says George Hassell to Miss Nugent; "I thought Miss Allerton was with you."

"She left me the instant you entered the house by the opposite door. She has gone to Mr. Allerton's room to see if he is awake

from his nap, and whether he will join us to-day at dinner."

Mr. Harvey retired into the hall, closing the door after him.

"Can you spare me five minutes?" George asked.

"Five times five, if you wish for so many," Miss Nugent replied, wondering why she trembled.

"It is about the blind child—blind no longer, thank God—that I wish to speak."

"Oh!" exclaimed the coward, thankful at the reprieve.

"On my offering to answer for your being a faithful keeper of a secret, my friend, no other than our mutual acquaintance, Hugh Falcon, commissioned me to tell you all."

END OF VOL. I.

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